DOCTOR WHO

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL: FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

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Look-In Vol.9 (1979) #29: Sapphire & Steel's first cover appearance, four weeks prior to their comic-strip debut

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL: FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Sapphire and Steel: Further Assignments is a sourcebook for the *Doctor Who Roleplaying Game* and is a companion volume to *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* Whereas the previous sourcebook described the main characters and concepts from the TV series, including the basics of who Sapphire and Steel are and what they can do, this one looks at the spin-off stories from the comics, annuals and audio dramas.

The stories covered in this volume are less well known even to many fans of *Sapphire & Steel*, which makes them ideal as source material for assignments for elemental agents or, with minor adjustments, for adventures in the *Doctor Who* universe. This book contains a total of thirty-five detailed adventure ideas. Because of the relative brevity and simplicity of the comic-strips and text stories, they are largely more suited to single-session games. They're also written with a younger audience than the TV series in mind and didn't always stick to the continuity established by P.J. Hammond in terms of Sapphire and Steel's abilities. By comparison, the audios tend to have more depth to them and could be adapted for play over several sessions, particularly the longer stories. They're also more adult in tone than the TV series, and a few have content advisory warnings or parental discretion warnings. These are repeated at the start of the chapters of the stories concerned.

Naturally, the creators of these stories deserve to be credited for their work. The *Look-In* comic-strips were written by Angus Allan and illustrated by Arthur Ranson, both veteran contributors to the comic. For the text stories, those in the *Sapphire & Steel Annual* were written by Clive Hopwood, Glynis Holland and (probably) Brenda Apsley, with illustrations by Paul Crompton and Glenn Rix, while the sole story in the *Look-In Annual* was written by Angus Allan with illustrations by Arthur Ranson, the comic-strip team. Finally, the Big Finish audios were written by Steve Lyons, Joseph Lidster, David Bishop, Nigel Fairs, Simon Guerrier, Richard Dinnick and John Dorney, most of them regular writers for other Big Finish ranges. A complete list of writing credits by audio story is included at the back of *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* My thanks to them all!

SPOILERS ARE INEVITABLE! The nature of this sourcebook means that spoilers are inevitable throughout. If anyone intends to read or listen to the stories but hasn't yet done so, avoid the relevant chapters.

COMIC-STRIPS

Sapphire is in great danger . . .
SAPPHIRE & STEEL
POP COLOUR FEATURE ★ THE KNACK
Win their LP!
Look-in
Junior TVTimes No.33 week ending 11 August 1979 Every Thursday 11p
SAPPHIRE AND STEEL
EXCLUSIVE NEW PICTURE STRIP STARTS INSIDE TODAY!
MORK AND MINDY FEATURE AND BIG COLOUR PIN-UP!
Your other top picture strips:
FAMOUS FIVE
DICK TURPIN
BIONIC ACTION
MEET THE SMURFS
and lots more!
An exciting new story starts next week.

Look-In was a children's magazine published by ITV (and later by IPC) from 1971 until 1994. It covered television programmes being broadcast by ITV at the time as well as stars of pop, sport and comedy, and contained a mix of articles, interviews, photo spreads and – most importantly – comic-strips. *Look-In* launched a *Sapphire & Steel* strip in #33 of the 1979 volume (the issue numbering was reset to #1 at the start of each calendar year) and continued until #17 of the 1981 volume, with a thirteen-week break in 1980. The strip covered two pages per issue and the length of each story varied from three to nine issues. In total, *Look-In* published fourteen untitled stories and, unlike many similar strips, *Sapphire & Steel* remained in colour throughout its run. With the exception of *The Power of Hecate*, which gained a title for its reprint, the titles used here are of my own devising.

The tone of the comic-strips varied, and some were closer to that of the TV series than others. Among those which strayed furthest from their origins were stories that incorporated magical or fantastical elements. The strip depicted Sapphire and Steel as being able to travel through time, something that wasn't consistent with the TV series. The show's creator, P.J. Hammond, was aware of this, but as they were aimed at a younger audience than the TV show, he decided not to object. But for GMs who wish to stick to the TV continuity, some explanation for this ability will need to be provided.

THE MIRROR TRAP

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.9 (1979) #33-40

SYNOPSIS

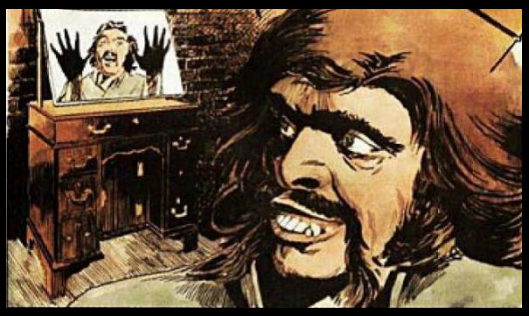
Scarstone House on a remote and forbidding moorland is home to recently widowed commercial artist Jack Terris and his son Marcus. Jack has been having dreams which have inspired him to work on a painting. Sapphire and Steel arrive and enter the house despite Jack's objections. Jack attacks the pair with a sword, but Sapphire turns time back to prevent him. She senses a force within the painting, which Jack has hidden away. Jack claims the painting is of his son, but its features are hideous. He admits that this isn't the first painting his dreams have told him to create.

Sapphire explains that there are evil forces beyond the bounds of time, one of which has chosen Jack as its tool. Jack is an instrument portraying his son through guilt as Marcus was at first an unwanted child. Now, an evil force is taking advantage of Jack's torment. Sapphire also senses an urge to go somewhere underground, a cavern, but the urge dissipates.

While Steel keeps Marcus busy, Sapphire finds that Jack has been compelled to continue working on the painting. She tries to paint over the hideous face but Jack struggles with her, resulting in the canvas being damaged. A supernatural force takes hold of Jack and he transforms into a brutish, almost bestial version of himself. As Steel rushes to help Sapphire, another of Jack's paintings falls from the wall onto him, and he finds himself within its scene, in Revolutionary France where he's about to be guillotined! Sapphire has to take time back again to rescue him from the painting.

During the distraction, the brutish Jack has gone into hiding, leaving Marcus behind. Jack

THE BRUTE



AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**5**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Fighting 4, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Alien
Hypnosis (Major) – But only against those tormented by negative emotions such as guilt or remorse
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special) – The force can take on the appearance of anyone it has mental control over, though usually in a twisted form (having the **Distinctive** trait)
Special – The Mirror Trap: The force can use mirrors as gateways into a reverse dimension and can force others through them, trapping them there
Special – Time's Agent: Similar to the Scions of Time, it can use paintings to create traps
Telepathy
Tough
Weakness (Major) – Insubstantial until empowered by a suitable mind; also limited to the environs of the house

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 8

JACK TERRIS

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Craft (Painting) 4, Fighting 2

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – His son
Emotional Complication (Major) – His late wife

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

goes down into an ancient cellar beneath the house. Here he sees his normal self reflected in a mirror, trapped there until the force that possesses him chooses to release him. As his reflection silently screams back, the brute says that he has been forced to take tangible form to deal with Sapphire and Steel.

Searching the house for Jack, Sapphire senses a presence from long, long ago here. In a disused room, she sees an image of an ancient sacrificial circle and realises that the house was built on its site. This is the source of the evil power. It has been pent up here for centuries, waiting for the right person to give it new life.

The brutish Jack appears and tricks Sapphire into being pulled through a mirror into a reflected image world from which she can't escape. Sapphire finds the real Jack Terris within this world. Although Sapphire could turn time back to free herself, she realises that she can't go far enough back to rescue Jack.

Back in the real world, the brute makes itself appear to be Marcus's father and uses a hand mirror to transfer the boy into the reflected world, where he meets Jack and Sapphire. Sapphire makes telepathic contact with Steel, who is being hunted by the brute, but her words are backwards to him now. Finally understanding her instructions, he finds a mirror and physically pulls them all through into the real world.

MARCUS TERRIS

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
(none)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

Sapphire casts her voice to trick the brute into entering a mirror to get them. But when it does, they smash all the mirrors in the house, trapping it in the reverse world. Sapphire and Steel depart, knowing that Jack and Marcus will leave this house after burning all the paintings.

TRIGGERS

Scarstone House was built on the site of a sacrificial stone circle, which is the source of the evil power. But it has not been able to free itself until Jack Terris moved into the house. The guilt that Jack feels about his son having been an unwanted child and, more recently, the remorse over his wife's death have allowed the force to influence him, compelling him to create paintings which somehow reinforce its power.

IRREGULARITIES

The irregularity is the evil force which resides on the site of Scarstone House. Sapphire explains that it is from "*beyond the bounds of time*", so it's likely that it's actually one of Time's agents which has used a weakness generated by the psychic residue of the sacrifices that took place here in prehistoric times.

In common with the TV series, the force isn't given a name. It can influence human minds and compelled Jack Terris to create paintings which act as traps (similar to how the Scions of Time were able to do in *Assignment I*). It also influences Marcus to see it as his father. It can step into mirrors, which are gateways between our world and one in which everything is reversed. Its control over Jack Terris allows it to swap places with him, imprisoning the real Jack in the mirror world while taking on the form of a warped, brutish version of him in ours.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire takes time back on a couple of occasions (but not enough to rescue Jack) and bemoans the fact that Steel can't do this.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is a classic Base-Under-Siege scenario, with the house in an isolated location and lacking even a telephone. Its contents do however include a suit of medieval armour, including a sword which could be useful as a weapon (as Jack attempts to wield against Sapphire and Steel).

Jack Terris's transformation is very reminiscent of that of Dr Jekyll into Mr Hyde, whereas Steel being transported into a painting is straight out of *Assignment I*, in which Sapphire was similarly trapped in a painting and almost beheaded. It appears that any of the paintings Jack has created under the influence of the force could be similar traps. Who knows to what other times and places they might lead?

The two possible allies in this story, Jack and Marcus, actually have very limited influence over the plot and their characters are sketchy. The GM could flesh them out and make them more central to the action.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Jack Terris:** An artist who has fallen under the influence of the evil force. Jack feels guilt over his son and remorse over his late wife.
- **Marcus Terris:** Jack's son, aged about twelve. Has a Raleigh Chopper bike.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The evil force is still there, just trapped in the mirror world. Anyone else moving into the house could free it again if they are tormented by guilt.

THE THING FROM THE PICTURE

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.9 (1979) #41-45

SYNOPSIS

The parents of Sarah Johnson, a deaf-mute girl, buy her an antique necklace for her fourteenth birthday, and the jeweller gives her a ring as an additional gift. Back home, a beam of sunlight reflects from the ring to the necklace and onto a Victorian print on the wall of Sarah's bedroom. The painting depicts a mystical figure in a woodland setting accompanied by fairies. The figure calls out to Sarah, and she finds she can now both speak and hear.

Sapphire and Steel arrive downstairs and warn Sarah's parents that their daughter is in danger. Mr Johnson tells his wife to phone the police and then attacks Steel. Sapphire turns time back to prevent this.

Upstairs, the entity in the picture enters Sarah's mind and takes control of her. When she goes downstairs, her father realises there's something wrong and goes towards her. The voice in Sarah's head tells her to think of a deep valley hidden amongst the woods, and her father is instantly transported there.

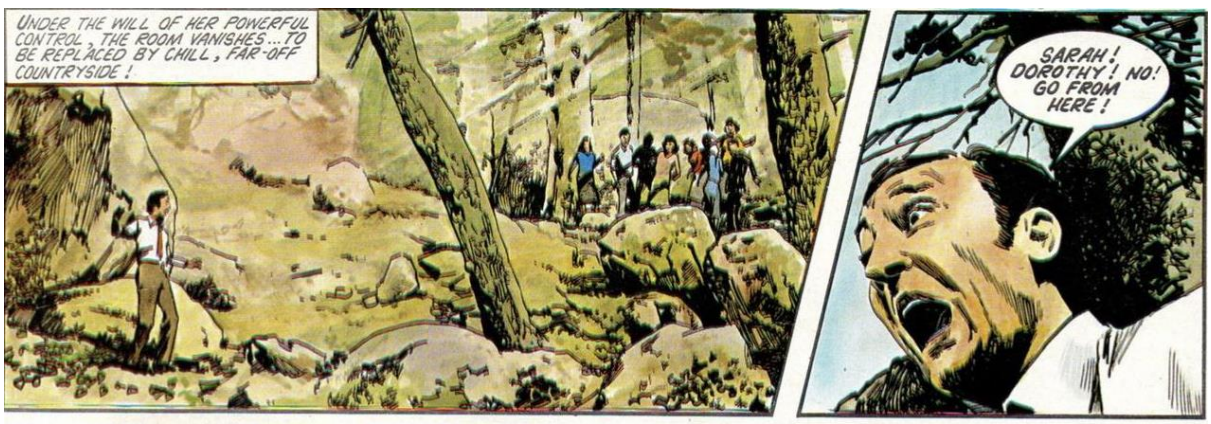
Sapphire tells Mrs Johnson that her daughter is controlled by the evil side of Time itself. She and Steel realise that the ring and the necklace are two parts of the trigger, and they head up to Sarah's bedroom to locate the third. They find that Sarah is again deaf and mute, the presence in her mind having become dormant. They also notice that the face of the figure in the Victorian print has disappeared, vanished into Sarah's mind.

As the presence takes control of Sarah again, it gets her to think of a rowing boat sinking far out at sea. Sapphire flings herself out of the room, but Steel is transported into that scenario, created by images projected from Sarah's mind. Sapphire again turns time back by a few minutes, having to overcome the entity's resistance to do so, and Steel returns.

The elementals realise that the force inside Sarah's mind thrives on the destruction of human beings. But Sapphire tells Mrs Johnson that her daughter's birthday party must go ahead as planned and uses her hypnotic powers to keep the woman calm.

As the guests arrive, Sapphire and Steel use the distraction to go back up to Sarah's room and examine the print with the missing face. Sapphire intends to re-draw the face, and Steel scans the picture with his mind and goes back to the artist's studio in 1873. He telepathically describes the picture in detail to Sapphire so she can complete it again.

At the party, the entity suddenly takes control of Sarah again and sends her mother and all


UNDER THE WILL OF HER POWERFUL CONTROL, THE ROOM VANISHES... TO BE REPLACED BY CHILL, FAR-OFF COUNTRYSIDE!
SARAH! DOROTHY! NO! GO FROM HERE!

THE SPIRIT

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	*****	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	*****

*Gains the Coordination and Strength of its host.

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 4, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Alien
Immaterial (Special Bad) – Has no physical body of its own
Immunity – All physical attacks
Indomitable
Possess
Psychic
Telepathy
Teleport – Its host and others nearby
Weakness (Major) – Trapped powerless within a picture until released by use of the ring and the necklace, and can be drawn back into it if the picture is subsequently restored

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 8

the guests to the wooded valley where her father is.

Sapphire completes her restoration of the print and the entity is drawn back into it. Sapphire destroys the picture before it can escape again, and everyone is returned to the house. The elementals leave, and the humans will think the events were only a dream.

TRIGGERS

There are three triggers in this story - the necklace, the ring and the picture – and all three are needed to release the entity from the painting. They are presumably linked in some way and were of significance to the entity.

IRREGULARITIES

Sapphire talks of "*the evil side of Time*". Although Time itself doesn't make an appearance, the thing in the picture is presumably another of its agents.

The entity, a spirit of some kind perhaps connected with nature judging by the painting, can enter the mind of a victim and take control of them. In the case of Sarah, it also returns her hearing and speech. When the entity is dormant in Sarah's mind, the girl reverts to being deaf and mute. When it is active, it can speak through Sarah, but she is usually also able to speak independently of it. Sarah refers to the spirit only as "he".

The entity is able to draw upon images in the mind of Sarah and use them to create environments to teleport others to. Sarah is transported with them but is able to teleport home, leaving the others marooned. Whether these environments exist in reality or just within the mind is unclear.

The spirit doesn't seem to have any motivation beyond creating chaos and preying on the unwary out of sheer malice.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire again takes time back to avoid Steel being attacked by Sarah's father and to rescue him from the sinking boat, a feat which is quickly becoming overused in the comics.

Steel takes Sapphire's usual role in scanning

SARAH JOHNSON

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Craft (Drawing) 2, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Impaired (Major) – Deaf and mute (Sarah loses this when the spirit takes control)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

the picture and going back (or sending his mind back) to view the artist at work. As this isn't part of his core abilities, he's presumably using his Elemental Agent trait and spending Story Points.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

There are a lot of elements repeated from the previous story. Sapphire and Steel arrive at a house to deliver their warnings, only for Steel to be attacked by one of the occupants, and Sapphire saves him by taking time back a few minutes. The story again revolves around possession, and another painting is involved. The unnamed evil force is again defeated by being trapped within an object which is then destroyed, in this case a picture rather than a mirror. The GM might wish to change some of this to avoid over-familiarity.

As with many of the *Look-In* comic-strips, the main guest character is a child or teenager, with adults having very much a secondary role. As a result, the adults in particular are one-dimensional and could do with fleshing out.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Sarah Johnson:** A deaf and mute girl approaching her fourteenth birthday. She doesn't seem too upset to be possessed by the figure from the painting, but this might be because it restores her speech and hearing.
- **Mr & Mrs Johnson:** Doting and very protective of their daughter. Otherwise nondescript.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- What is the untold origin of the entity in the picture and its link with the necklace and the ring? A prequel assignment could be used to address this.

THE PHANTOM FRENCHMAN

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.9 (1979) #46-51

SYNOPSIS

In south-east England, young Lee Rochester discovers an old ship's anchor in a field and brings it back to the converted lighthouse which is the family home to add to his collection of maritime memorabilia. His father David cleans it and hangs it on Lee's bedroom wall. That night, Lee has a nightmare of an attempted landing of French spies that took place one hundred and seventy years before. The French were repelled but one of their number was abandoned by his retreating comrades to be captured or killed by the British.

Lee is being comforted by his parents when Sapphire and Steel arrive at the front door. David won't let them in, but he then sees the image of a man in an old French naval uniform. Steel breaks down the door but the vision has vanished. Sapphire explains to the family about Time trying to break out from its dimension, but that it needs a trigger to do so.

Lee hears something calling to him and goes back up to his room where he finds the French naval officer. When the man clasps Lee's hand, they are both transported back to the failed beach landing when the Frenchman was abandoned. Just before they are both taken prisoner by British soldiers, the Frenchman explains that they'll let him die of his wounds. He wants Lee to persuade the soldiers to take him to a doctor and say he's a British spy.

Back in the future, Sapphire has set up a time loop on the stairs to stop David and Sandra Rochester disturbing them. Steel identifies the old anchor as the trigger. Sapphire uses her powers to see the scene on the beach one hundred and seventy years before and realises that Time is trying to use Lee to change history. Sapphire and Steel reach back in time with their wills and pull Lee into the present.

Outside the lighthouse, a group of figures in Napoleonic-era uniforms materialise. Sapphire explains that they're not spectres but figures from Time itself, real people roused from an endless sleep. But a gust of wind seems to disintegrate them.

Sapphire uses her powers to see what would have happened if the Frenchman had survived. She sees him returned to France in an exchange of prisoners. But he had gained vital information for the French while he was in England, and France would go on to win the Napoleonic Wars.

With Lee's parents gone to see Sandra's brother, a parson they hope can exorcise the lighthouse, Sapphire and Steel use Lee as bait. The Frenchman appears and tries to take the boy back again. But Sapphire stops time, allowing Steel to freeze the Frenchman,

THE FRENCHMAN

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 3, Fighting 3, Marksman 2, Subterfuge 4, Survival 1

TRAITS
Brave
Distinctive
Obligation (Major) - Time
Vortex – Limited to between his own time (c1809) and the time in which the anchor is discovered (1979)

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

reducing him to a small, frozen lump. Sapphire places it in the lighthouse's freezer until they can take it away with them to dispose of properly. David and Sandra return, and she tells them to bury the anchor in the field again.

But outside, Steel is still weakened from lowering his body temperature and sees that the British soldiers who captured the Frenchman have also been brought here. Sapphire warns that any humans they touch will be lost, and their guns are real enough. The soldiers want Lee, as they regard him as their prisoner.

Steel is too weak to help Sapphire, so he sends a telepathic summons for their fellow elemental, Lead. Lead appears and, immune to the soldiers' attack, turns them into lead toys.

The three elementals depart, and the family decides to forget all about the experience!

TRIGGERS

The ship's anchor is the trigger. Lee found it in a nearby field; it's presumably a relic from the failed French landing. The area around the lighthouse is reclaimed land and would have been beneath the sea at the time.

IRREGULARITIES

Time is again the enemy in this story, and the Frenchman is its agent. He has been given the opportunity to prevent his own death one hundred and seventy years before. Sapphire describes the other figures from the Frenchman's time as being real people, not spectres, and the Frenchman is presumably the same. Time has lifted him out of his timeline, and he is flesh and blood.

The British soldiers are almost incidental to Time's scheme. But transported to the present day, they act as useful distractions, and as a final threat for the elementals to overcome.

ENGLISH SOLDIER

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 3, Ingenuity 2, Presence 2, Resolve 2, Strength 3
SKILLS: Fighting 2, Marksman 2, Survival 2
TRAITS: Vortex (as the Frenchman)
EQUIPMENT: Musket (2/5/7 damage)
TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 1

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND LEAD)

Sapphire sets up a small time loop, much as she did to the police officer in *Assignment I*.

However, it's Steel who senses that the anchor is the trigger.

Steel uses his strength to kick down the lighthouse door with ease. He also demonstrates his ability to lower his body temperature to sub-zero levels.

Lead (from *Assignment I*) makes a brief appearance in this story and is shown to be able to transform the soldiers into tiny lead figures. This isn't an ability we saw in his TV appearance, so he's using his Elemental Agent trait and spending Story Points to achieve this.

LEE ROCHESTER

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 1, Knowledge 1

TRAITS
(none)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The lighthouse setting doesn't contribute either to the story's plot or its atmosphere and seems like a wasted opportunity. The GM could redress this, perhaps by having the lighthouse play a role in the defeat of the French landing party or the capture of the spy, rather than merely standing in the background.

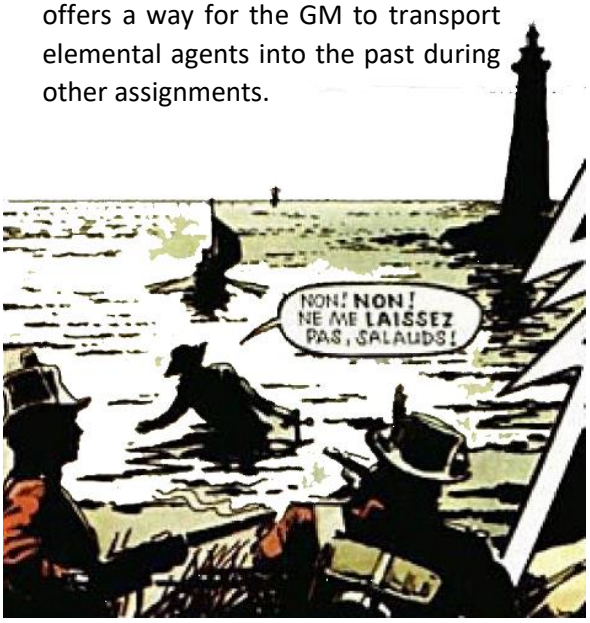
Lead's sudden appearance at the climax of the story is a *deus ex machina*. Hopefully the players won't need the GM to pull such a trick to rescue their characters!

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Lee Rochester:** Teenage boy, son of David and Sandra. Interested in ships and the sea.
- **The Frenchman:** An unnamed French officer from the Napoleonic Wars. Time has given him a chance to prevent his death during a failed landing on the English coast c1809. Although human, Time has given him the ability to transport himself and others to and from his own era.
- **David & Sandra Rochester:** Lee's parents. Sandra's brother is a parson who lives not far from them.
- **Lead:** An elemental agent with great strength. See *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* for Lead's stats.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Time's gift to the Frenchman, granting him the ability to travel in time and bring others back to his own time, offers a way for the GM to transport elemental agents into the past during other assignments.



THE MAGICIAN'S CABINET

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.9 (1979) #52 & Vol.10 (1980) #1-3

SYNOPSIS

At the Majestic Theatre in Clayport, Arthur Penman – a.k.a. the Great Boldini – asks a member of the audience to assist him in his next trick. Bernard Smith reluctantly steps up onto the stage and examines the magician's "vanishing cabinet" before nervously stepping inside it. In the dark, Bernard sings a little tune to soothe his nerves. When the cabinet door is opened again, Bernard has vanished and, despite his best efforts, the Great Boldini is unable to bring him back.

As the missing man's wife Sally and son David are taken backstage, Sapphire and Steel appear. Sapphire persuades the Great Boldini to go through the trick again but with Steel inside the cabinet. First, Boldini explains that the cabinet was used by Victorian magician David Devant perhaps a century before. Inside the box, Steel has a vision from much earlier than Victorian times: a ritual in Ancient Egypt.

Emerging from the cabinet, Steel tells Sapphire that he believes that some part of the box must have come from Ancient Egypt and that Time has taken Bernard Smith. Sally tells the

THE GREAT BOLDINI

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Craft (Stage Magic) 4, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Charming

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

elementals that her husband may have hummed a tune if he was afraid in the dark, but she can't remember it. Sapphire explains that the combination of the cabinet and the tune must have attracted the attention of an evil force that has taken her husband.

Suddenly, a figure dressed in Ancient Egyptian robes but with the head of a lioness and wielding an ankh glowing with power steps from the cabinet. It's a goddess who has been brought back to life in exchange for Bernard! The goddess sets the theatre alight with her ankh before killing Boldini and flying away.

As the theatre is evacuated, Sapphire tells Sally that her husband has been taken into the past. Young David remembers the tune his father hums when nervous. Sapphire steps into the

SEKHMET

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**6**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**8**

SKILLS
Athletics 4, Convince 3, Fighting 4, Marksman 3

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance
Armour (5 points)
Fear Factor 2
Flight (Major)
Natural Weapon (Major) – Deathly Touch: L(4/L/L) damage
Obligation (Major) – Time
Quick Reflexes

EQUIPMENT
Ankh: 7(3/7/10) damage, and a Good or Fantastic result sets the target ablaze

TECH LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 8

cabinet with the boy while he sings the tune, and they are both transported back to Ancient Egypt where they locate Bernard. Rescuing him means that Sapphire has Eternity on her side, giving her the power to reverse time to before the Great Boldini invited him on stage.

Back in the future, everything returns to normal. As Bernard gets up to go on stage, Steel tells him not to sing his tune while inside the cabinet; if he does, they'll have to start all over again!

TRIGGERS

The cabinet looks Chinese and was probably only constructed in the 19th Century. But some part of it dates back to Ancient Egypt.

The tune that Bernard Smith hums while inside the cabinet includes the lyrics "*Wear a smile, All the while, Never mind the dark*". Singing it within the cabinet completes the trigger, allowing the box's occupants to be spirited back to the time the Egyptian goddess came from.

IRREGULARITIES

Time is again behind the events of this story but again doesn't make an appearance. Its agent is the lion-headed Egyptian goddess who wants to live again. Although unnamed in the story (in common with many of the hostile entities Sapphire and Steel face in the comic-strips), she is most likely Sekhmet. She is described in the story as being destructive, and Sekhmet is a warrior goddess. If Sapphire and Steel had not stopped her, she would have left a trail of death and destruction in the modern world.

FOR ONE MOMENT, SAPPHIRE'S DRESS CHANGES... AND SHE KNOWS SHE HAS ETERNITY ON HER SIDE...
LET TIME BE TURNED BACK! LET MY TIME REGRESS! LET BOLDINI LIVE AGAIN!

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire uses the cabinet to go back to Ancient Egypt, but this isn't by using her innate powers as she requires David Smith to sing his father's song, activating the trigger. Once they locate Bernard, Sapphire's clothing briefly transforms into Egyptian dress, and "*she knows she has Eternity on her side*", allowing her to take time in the present day back to stop any of this happening. The reference to Eternity is puzzling. Is Eternity the identity of the authority that Sapphire and Steel work for, the opponent of Time? This brief snippet of information could be used to expand on what we know of the elementals' background.

By comparison, Steel does very little in this story, other than step into the cabinet for Boldini to demonstrate his vanishing trick for the elementals.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The comic-strip stories are now starting to add more obvious supernatural elements to the mix, which may not be to all tastes. If the GM prefers, Sekhmet could be replaced with a Pharaoh who wishes to live again.

The story is quite brief and could easily be extended by the addition of a longer adventure in Ancient Egypt.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Arthur Penman, The Great Boldini:** A stage magician who tours the provincial theatres. Owns the cabinet.
- **Bernard, Sally & David Smith:** A family enjoying Boldini's show. Bernard has a mild fear of the dark, but other than that, we know very little about them.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The Egyptian gods could be used as a source of recurring foes for Sapphire and Steel, particularly if they bring the wrath of Sekhmet on themselves. This provides an opportunity to introduce the Osirans for a *Sapphire & Steel/ Doctor Who* crossover.

THE POWER OF HECATE

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #4-6; reprinted in *Look-In: The Best of Look-In – The Seventies* (2007).

SYNOPSIS

Young Diane Simson brings a stray cat back to her family's tenth floor London flat. Except this stray, Tiggy, seems to be imaginary. Her parents, Peter and Jenny, humour her. But Tiggy, although invisible, is real, and as Diane sleeps that night, it goes berserk, attacking the living room furniture.

Sapphire and Steel arrive to help. But as Peter Simson answers the door, a figure bursts from his daughter's bedroom, a twisted version of Diane possessed by the spirit of a witch, Hecate. Hecate flees with the cat, in reality Grimalkin her familiar, beating Sapphire and Steel back with a blast of pure evil that prevents them from following. She leaves the real Diane behind in a cataleptic sleep that she can't be woken from, as if she were dead.

Sapphire and Steel tell the girl's parents that she must have summoned the cat from the depths of time, perhaps by some trigger phrase she said. She has released a power of evil from the past in the shape of a cat. Hecate was the greatest witch of ancient times and could cause havoc in the modern world.

Elsewhere, Hecate casts a spell of destruction that demolishes Battersea Power Station. She sends Grimalkin back to deal with Sapphire and Steel, but Sapphire freezes time, allowing Steel to catch the cat and wrap it in his jacket. They take it back to the Simsons' flat, where Sapphire plants a hypnotic suggestion in the still-sleeping Diane's mind. Sapphire is going to turn time back and show her the cat, but Diane will refuse to see it.

Hecate senses that Sapphire and Steel are trying to stop her. When she destroys the Houses of Parliament, they reassemble as, back at the flat, Diane wakes and rejects the cat. Hecate and Grimalkin vanish, their hold on Diane and this time period severed.

HECATE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**4***	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2***

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 3, Fighting 1, Knowledge 4, Marksman 3, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Distinctive
Flight (Major)
Impulsive
Indomitable
Natural Weapon (Major) – Destructive
Blast: 12(6/12/18) damage
Networked (Major) - Grimalkin
***Possess** – Can create a separate form for herself based on her victim (gaining their Coordination & Strength); the victim is left catatonic
Telekinesis – Her "*blast of tangible evil*"
Weakness (Major) – Needs a victim/focus

TECH LEVEL: 2 **STORY POINTS:** 10

TRIGGERS

Hecate's familiar Grimalkin is the means by which she is able to return. It seems that the

cat needs to attach itself to somebody susceptible to allow its mistress to take possession of them and create a new body for herself based on theirs.

How the cat manifested in the modern day is less clear. But Sapphire speculates that Diane brought it here by some phrase she said. Indeed, Diane is depicted singing a lullaby to the cat: "*Tiggy, Tiggy, black and white, Goes a-hunting through the night…*"

GRIMALKIN

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**5**	**RESOLVE**	**1**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Athletics 4, Fighting 3, Subterfuge 5

TRAITS
Alien, Alien Senses (night vision, hearing beyond human range), Flight (Major), Hypnosis (Minor), Invisible (Special Good), Natural Weapon (Minor: Claws – Strength damage, ignores first 5 points of Armour or similar), Networked (Major: Hecate), Size: Tiny (Major)

TECH LEVEL: N/A **STORY POINTS:** 2

IRREGULARITIES

Hecate is described as the most powerful witch of ancient times, but quite how wide-ranging her magic is remains unknown. She is seen to possess Diane and create a twisted duplicate form for herself. She has the power of flight, and can cast destructive spells capable of destroying large buildings. Sapphire and Steel are pushed back and rendered immobile by a blast of tangible evil she directs at them. Hecate may have other spells; the GM can add the Magic Spells trait from page 30 if desired.

Grimalkin has the power of flight and can become invisible. Sapphire warns Steel not to look at the cat's eyes, which may be capable of mesmerising humans. Grimalkin's claws are sharp enough to scratch Steel.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire freezes time to catch Grimalkin and then turns time back to resolve the adventure.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

One of the shortest of the comic-strip stories at only six pages over three issues. It could easily be expanded, especially as Sapphire and Steel only defeat Hecate because the witch sends Grimalkin back to attack them. If Hecate were more cunning (and less destructive), the elementals would need to work out how to track her down. The story also lacks a real confrontation with Hecate, which is a shame.

The comic-strips have fully embraced the supernatural now, and it's clear that magic exists in this version of the *Sapphire & Steel* universe. GMs who wish to retain more rational explanations could replace the magic with psychic powers perhaps.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Peter, Jenny and Diane Simson:** Other than Diane's habit of bringing home stray cats, there is little information about the family.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Another confrontation with Hecate would be welcome, to address the lack of a significant one in this story.

UNIT ZERO

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #7-11

SYNOPSIS

Schoolboys Danny Lewis and Geoff Foster collect militaria. Geoff has acquired an old cap badge which looks as if it dates from the Second World War, but which even the War Museum hasn't been able to identify. Geoff asks Danny to see if his mum, a clairvoyant, will "read" the badge. But when she does, she collapses as a man in an officer's uniform and with an eyepatch appears. Danny blacks out, and when he recovers, the stranger has gone.

Danny rushes from the house to find help and bumps into Sapphire and Steel. They already know what has happened and are here to help. Sapphire examines Danny's mum and realises that she's in a catatonic state, seemingly dead and yet alive. The evil forces of Time have broken through again!

While Sapphire phones for an ambulance, Steel explains to Danny that his mother's psychic contact with the past must have been what the evil was waiting for. Sapphire concentrates on the badge and finds herself in London in 1943. She's at a hotel and asks for a Captain Simpson, who she somehow believes to be staying there. But she's overheard by an officer from Military Intelligence and returns to the present day to avoid being arrested.

With Danny's mother taken away to hospital, Sapphire questions his friend Geoff about the badge. Geoff tells them he got it from someone he met on holiday, but he doesn't know them.

Sapphire senses that they're in more danger than they realise. To try to trace Captain Simpson, Steel heads to the Ministry of Defence while Sapphire takes the badge to the War Museum. At the MoD, an official tells Steel that without more to go on, he can't trace Simpson, and the badge doesn't match that of any British army unit. After Steel has gone, the official phones the Minister to report that somebody is asking about Unit Zero.

At the War Museum, a curator Sapphire speaks to secretly phones the Minister of Defence

CAPTAIN SIMPSON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Fighting 2, Marksman 3, Science 2, Subterfuge 2, Survival 3, Technology 1, Transport 2

TRAITS
Distinctive
Impaired (Minor) – Missing an eye, giving him a -2 penalty on any rolls for actions normally requiring depth perception
Military Rank (Major x2) – Captain
Psychic
Telepathy
Voice of Authority

EQUIPMENT
Service Revolver: 5(2/5/7) damage

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 6

PROFESSOR MANNIX

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 2, Medicine 3, Science 5, Technology 4

TRAITS
Boffin
Distinctive
Psychic
Technically Adept
Telepathy

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

with the same message. He's told to keep Sapphire there until Special Branch arrive, but she has overheard the call and swiftly leaves.

Meanwhile, out on a lonely common where a military installation once stood, Captain Simpson speaks apparently to thin air. He is heard by Professor Mannix in a parallel dimension. Mannix asks Simpson to help him break through so that together they can destroy the world and only Time will live on!

Sapphire has a sudden flash of mental contact with Simpson and realises they're in terrible danger. She uses the cap badge to go back to 1943 again to find out more. Heading to Whitehall, Sapphire mentions Unit Zero to the police officer guarding 10 Downing Street in order to get a meeting with Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Although Churchill has summoned Military Intelligence to arrest Sapphire, he tells her that Captain Simpson and Professor Mannix both work for Unit Zero. Together, they have devised a weapon so totally destructive that he has ordered the plans to be burned. But Simpson and Mannix retain the information in their heads. Churchill knows they are planning to defect to a foreign power, but he believes they will be killed in the attempt.

Having learned what she needs, Sapphire reverses time a little more so that Churchill never met her, then returns to the present. She tells Steel that the world could end if they don't stop Simpson from bringing Mannix through. She says that the pair have no real existence; they are Time itself and will live on even if the world is destroyed.

Sapphire believes the only way to trace Simpson is if she brings Mannix through herself. Despite the risk, Steel reluctantly agrees and, combining their power, the two elementals enter the fourth dimension of Time which parallels our own world. They locate Mannix in that dimension's chaos and, with him acting as their guide and doorway, bring him through to where Simpson is still on the common. But Sapphire then sends the two

TRANSFIXED, UNABLE TO MOVE OR SPEAK, DANNY GAPES AT THE STRANGER SO SUDDENLY MATERIALISED IN FRONT OF HIM!
AND SO THE WAY RE-OPENS! I LIVE AGAIN!

men back to the date in 1943 when they fled from the camp. Once more, the traitors are shot by the camp's guards as they attempt to desert to the enemy. Sapphire and Steel retain the cap badge as it's safer with them.

TRIGGERS

The trigger is Captain Simpson's cap badge, but it only activates when Danny's mum tries her clairvoyant powers on it (she has Psychic and Psychometry). The badge enables a Time entity to enter our world in the form of its owner.

IRREGULARITIES

Captain Simpson is the main irregularity in this story, but he's actually composed of Time itself and, drawn to the cap badge, has taken the original Simpson's form.

Another Time entity has taken the form of Simpson's colleague in Unit Zero, Professor Mannix, but this one is still trapped in Time's dimension as there isn't a trigger to bring him through to our reality.

The original Simpson and Mannix developed a weapon so destructive that it could lay the entire world to waste. Quite what it was isn't stated, so the GM has a blank sheet to play with. It could be chemical or bacteriological in nature, or perhaps they had beaten Oppenheimer to developing the first atomic bomb, but one powerful enough to destroy the world. They might even have developed a means to open up a breach in reality, exposing the Earth to Time itself. Simpson and Mannix planned to defect and pass the secrets of this weapon to Germany, but they were shot during their escape from the Unit Zero camp.

The Time entities which have taken their form intend to construct the weapon and destroy the world. Although they are composed of Time itself, they are mortal and can be killed. In our reality, their stats are human.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire's ability to reverse time is stretched further than in the TV story, and she has the ability to step into the past and into "*the fourth dimension*" (the latter with Steel's help, presumably in terms of providing Story Points).

But perhaps this is because of the nature of the threat she and Steel face: entities of Time which have formed a link between 1943 and 1980.

Steel states that he and Sapphire aren't immortal, which is consistent with the TV series.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

After the previous few brief comic-strips, we finally get a more complex story, and one more in keeping with the TV series (despite the liberties taken with Sapphire's powers).

As already mentioned, the nature of the ultimate weapon isn't specified, so the GM can use their imagination to come up with something suitably destructive.

We're given a glimpse of "*the fourth dimension of Time*" from which the entities that have taken the forms of Simpson and Mannix have come. It's likely that this is the dimension that Sapphire described as the corridor of time back in *Assignment I*, and the entities are examples of the creatures that exist at the beginnings and ends of time and are constantly trying to break through. Here, that dimension is depicted as a formless, terrifying place filled with hideous creatures. In the following story, "*the fourth dimension of Time*" is the past.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Captain Simpson:** A creature of Time itself which has taken the form of a British army captain. In 1943, the real Simpson was part of Unit Zero, a secret project developing an ultimate weapon. He was shot trying to defect with its secrets.
- **Professor Mannix:** Another Time entity in human form, but as yet still trapped in its own dimension. The real Mannix was another member of Unit Zero and was also shot trying to defect.
- **Danny Lewis & Geoff Foster:** A pair of teenagers with an interest in militaria. Danny's mother is a clairvoyant.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Although the ultimate weapon isn't described, a foray into an aberrant timeline in which it has done its work and left the world in ruins would present an interesting challenge for the elementals.

NOW, IN THE TERRIFYING FOURTH DIMENSION OF TIME THAT PARALLELS OUR OWN WORLD...
MANNIX! PROFESSOR MANNIX!
I AM HERE! YOU WILL TAKE ME TO SIMPSON...?
THAT IS OUR PURPOSE! WE SHALL BE YOUR DOORWAY! LEAD US!

GHOST TRAIN

PUBLICATION
Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #12-14

SYNOPSIS
High on a lonely moor, brother and sister Martin and Anna Brown discover a disused railway tunnel. Near the entrance, Anna finds an old buckle from a lady's belt. When they look at the tunnel mouth again, railway tracks have appeared and a steam train roars out, almost hitting the children. As it rushes past, Anna sees her Nana in the last carriage, and when the train vanishes, Anna has disappeared as well!

Sapphire and Steel appear and tell Martin that his sister has fallen into the evil clutches of Time and that the belt buckle was the trigger. Steel takes Martin to tell his parents what has happened.

The train is back in "*the fourth dimension of Time*" (which in this story means the past), and Anna is aboard it in the carriage with her Nana. Anna's mother has told her that her Nana died in a train crash, so Anna tries to convince her to come away with her in order to save her life. But her Nana doesn't seem to believe her.

Ahead of the train, a bolt of lightning strikes a viaduct, bringing one of the spans down, and the train crashes into the gap, plunging towards the river below. Witnessing the crash, Sapphire freezes time and enters the suspended carriage to rescue Anna. She tells the girl that her grandmother was evil and practiced witchcraft. She is trying to take Anna to give herself a new life again. Anna resists, but Sapphire makes her forget.

ANNA BROWN

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 1

TRAITS
Impulsive
Stubborn

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

In the past, the train plunges to its destruction. In the present, Anna runs off to join her waiting parents, and Sapphire tells Steel they must take the buckle to their own place, where it will be harmless.

TRIGGERS

The belt buckle that Anna finds is the trigger. Although not stated, the buckle presumably belonged to her Nana, explaining the link.

IRREGULARITIES

Anna's Nana has entered into a deal with Time that she can live again as Anna by allowing the girl to die in the train crash in her place.

Nana is described by Sapphire as having been an evil witch. But as she only features in a few panels and does little but sit in her seat on the train, we have no idea as to her powers. Stats for her have therefore not been provided, and the GM has *carte blanche* to design them as desired.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire travels in time and freezes it, and makes Anna forget seeing her Nana. Once again, Steel plays only a minor role in the story. Sapphire refers to "*our own place*", presumably the dimension that she and the other elementals come from.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is another very brief story (six pages over three issues). In fact, it's little more than a single incident. It could possibly be used as a short introductory adventure or an interlude.

We're also back in the realms of the supernatural and witchcraft. The familiar pattern of a dead person being offered a new life by replacing a living one is repeated again.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Anna and Martin Brown**: Siblings who live near the old railway tunnel. Anna is headstrong and stubborn.
- **Anna's Nana:** Described as an evil witch, she died in the train crash. Judging from her clothes, the crash occurred in the Edwardian era.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- A ghost train is a staple of supernatural stories and a traditional one would be in keeping with *Sapphire & Steel*.

REVENGE OF THE DEMON

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #15-19

SYNOPSIS

In London in 1666, a boy in 20th Century clothing is being attacked by a group of bullies. He's rescued by the arrival of Sapphire in a sedan chair and wearing period dress. Sapphire knows the boy's name, Billy Moon, and tells him that an evil force has brought him back in time. The sedan takes them to the Golden Cross Inn where they meet Steel, resplendent in Restoration clothing and a fashionable wig!

Billy tells the elementals that the last thing he remembers before arriving here was being outside a junk shop with a painting of 17th Century London in the window. Sapphire asks if there was anything else – did he do or say something, or whistle or sing a tune perhaps? But Billy can't remember, which means they can't yet identify the complete trigger and get him home.

When Sapphire and Steel leave Billy in their room at the inn to go and buy more suitable clothing for him, a demonic figure speaks to him from within the room's fireplace. The demon has Billy under its control, and he doesn't remember anything about it when it departs.

BILLY MOON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Run for Your Life!

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Sapphire and Steel return and take Billy, now appropriately dressed for 1666, to locate the spot where the junk shop will be in 1980, on Whitechapel High Street. Once there, Sapphire asks Billy to concentrate on what he saw in the shop window, while she transfers herself through him. She sees the picture in his mind; it's an etching titled *Gutter Lane, 1666* by Morris after Van Hulst. Billy suddenly roars "*It's forbidden!*" and, lashing out at Sapphire, he runs off.

Sapphire and Steel give chase but lose Billy in the crowd. Sapphire senses that he is under mental control. They head to Gutter Lane and

DEMONIC AVATAR OF TIME

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**6**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**0/8***

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 6

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance – If it can be seen
Armour (5 points)
Fear Factor 2 – Only if it can be seen
Hypnosis (Major)
***Immaterial (Special Bad)** – Strength 8 only if it somehow gains material form
Invisible (Special Bad) – At the GM's discretion, it may be seen by certain Alien Senses or Psychic traits
Psychic
Telepathy

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 10

find the artist Van Hulst making a preliminary sketch. Sapphire persuades him to include herself in the sketch. This provides her with the key to locating Billy in 1980: as soon as he looks at the etching, she will know and they'll be able to prevent Time from grabbing him.

But Billy is in a nearby alley and has heard what they are planning. The demon controlling him gets him to show himself so that Sapphire and Steel again give chase. They pursue him into an abandoned, semi-derelict house. In the cellar of the bakery next door, the oven collapses, starting the Great Fire of London!

Sapphire and Steel are still in the house searching for Billy, who has hidden away in the attic. The demon gloats that it has won as the elementals will not be able to survive the fire. Sapphire hears its words in her mind and realises that this has all been a trap for them!

Billy is released from the demon's control and realises his peril. He runs downstairs to Sapphire and Steel. But with the Great Fire of London raging outside, there is no escape from the burning house. Sapphire urges Billy to remember what he was doing when he saw the etching in the shop window, and he finally recalls that he was whistling a tune. He whistles it again and, due to the inclusion of Sapphire in Van Hulst's sketch, they are all transported back to 1980 – where their 17th Century clothing is no longer all the rage!

TRIGGERS

The trigger is again in multiple parts: the etching in the window of a junk shop in 1980 which forms the link to 1666, the date it was created; and Billy whistling a tune as he looked at it. The tune isn't identified in the story, but given *Sapphire & Steel*'s predilection for nursery rhymes, it's tempting to say it's *London's Burning*, a rhyme about the Great Fire of London.

Sapphire is able to create a trigger of her own by getting Van Hulst to include her in the preliminary sketch (and presumably therefore also in the final etching). This links her to the etching in the junk shop window in 1980, and Billy whistling the same tune activates the new trigger.

IRREGULARITIES

An avatar of Time is the foe in this story. It's in the form of a demonic-looking creature and has taken control of Billy. But it doesn't seem to be able to take direct action against

Sapphire and Steel, instead instructing Billy what to do. It's both invisible and intangible so it can't interact with the physical world.

Time is out for revenge against Sapphire and Steel for their past defeats of its schemes. So creating the trigger and stealing Billy away was deliberately intended to get their attention.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

We don't know how Sapphire and Steel arrived in 1666, but they clearly aren't able to transport Billy or themselves back to 1980 until Sapphire creates a trigger of her own to link the two times. As speculated in *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!*, it may be that Sapphire and Steel are normally assigned to their "home" time period, the late 20th Century, but their controlling authority can actually send them to other periods. It's just that they can't normally travel in time without something else to boost their powers. They may have been assigned to this mission as Billy comes from 1980, their "home" period. Alternatively, something may have happened prior to what we see in the comic-strip to drag Sapphire and Steel back to 1666 and they've been trapped there since. But see page 31 for more on this.

Sapphire reads Billy's mind to see the etching and later senses the demon's gloating, which tips her off that this is a trap for them.

Steel again seems secondary to Sapphire. This is the case in many of the comic-strips, with Steel rarely using his own special abilities.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is another of the more substantial tales and, setting aside the time travel issue, is eminently suitable as a *Sapphire & Steel* story.

The tale starts *in media res*, so we don't see Billy noticing the etching in the junk shop window and being cast back in time. But then, neither would the players in an assignment based on this. We also don't see Sapphire and Steel arriving in 1666. This isn't unusual, as they usually just turn up somewhere. In this case though, they've already set themselves up in the Golden Cross Inn and Sapphire has been searching London (from the comfort of a sedan chair) before we join them.

It's fun to see both Sapphire and Steel in period costume, particularly Steel in a long, curly wig! As with the 1930s setting of *Assignment V*, the GM should make the most of emphasising these details.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Billy Moon:** Boy who has fallen under the control of an avatar of Time. Lives in a council home for orphans near Whitechapel High Street in 1980.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Sapphire and Steel didn't get to see the demonic avatar of Time in this story. In fact, they might not even be aware of its existence. So a rematch would be ideal.

THE CAVE OF CAWDROC

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #33-37

SYNOPSIS

Andy Ellington's parents have taken him to the country to convalesce from a bad illness. As his friends are all in school, they buy him a puppy to play with.

Far away, Sapphire and Steel sense that the Tunnel of Time is about to be broken again.

Andy, his parents and the puppy, Porridge, go for a picnic in the woods. While his parents lay out the picnic, Andy and Porridge explore, until the puppy falls down a pit that suddenly opens up beneath him. Andy clambers down to rescue Porridge, but elsewhere, Sapphire and Steel realise that somebody has stumbled upon the Cave of Cawdroc. Cawdroc was a sorcerer who once held fearful sway in England's darkest age. It was foretold that he will live again through an infant, and that Time will restore him to absolute power.

Andy finds Porridge shivering in a cave at the bottom of the pit. There's an almost tangible evil in this place which the puppy can detect. Cawdroc suddenly appears in front of them. Porridge leaps at his throat, but the sorcerer flings the dog into a dimensional rift he opens.

In the forest above, Sapphire and Steel sense that the boy has gone. They locate Andy's parents, who have found Porridge but not their son. The father, Henry, suspects that the elementals have done something with Andy, but Sapphire and Steel tell him that he has been taken away to the parallel world of the Tunnel of Time by the evil force that seeks to break through into our world.

Andy wakes in a forest, thinking it was all a bad dream until he sees Cawdroc nearby. The boy runs away but quickly encounters an armoured knight on horseback. Thinking Andy to be a kitchen boy, he tries to take him back to the nearby castle, but Cawdroc kills the knight with

ANDY ELLINGTON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Knowledge 1

TRAITS
Dependency (Major) – Needs his medication every few hours or he'll lapse into a coma
Run for Your Life!

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

PORRIDGE

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 1, Coordination 2, Awareness 4
SKILLS: Fighting 1
TRAITS: Alien Senses (Tracking scent)
STORY POINTS: 1

a blast of magical energy. The sorcerer proclaims that they are in the 9th Century now!

CAWDROC

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Fighting 1, Knowledge 5 (AoE: Alchemy), Marksman 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 4

TRAITS
Distinctive
Fear Factor 1
Natural Weapon (Major) – Blast of Evil: L(4/L/L) damage
Obligation (Major) - Time
Special - Magic Spells: Similar to Sapphire & Steel's Elemental Agent trait, Cawdroc can spend Story Points equal to a trait's purchase cost to gain that trait for a single scene
Teleport
Vortex

TECH LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 12

Back in the 20th Century, Sapphire and Steel discuss Andy's predicament. They know that Cawdroc will try to take over his mind and body, so one of them has to go back and rescue him. Sapphire decides she will go, as Steel would try to use force, which could endanger Andy.

So Steel stays behind with Andy's parents and will remain in telepathic contact with Sapphire. Sapphire takes Porridge with her. Andy's mother also gives her the boy's tablets, which he needs to take regularly while convalescing.

In the 9th Century, Cawdroc tells Andy that he will give his powers to the boy, so that he will become Cawdroc. Andy will then be returned to the 20th Century to wreak havoc in Cawdroc's name. Meanwhile, the body of the knight that Cawdroc killed, Sir Nerovens, has been discovered, his head blasted to a fleshless skull. The knights and their squires realise it is Cawdroc's work. As Sapphire arrives in this time, they go to hunt him down.

In the 20th Century, Steel decides to go against Sapphire's plan and sends himself back to Cawdroc's time, where he appears as a knight on horseback. He bars the way of the knights whose quest for Cawdroc could interrupt Andy's rescue, resulting in a clash of sword against sword.

Returning to his cave, Cawdroc begins preparations for the transfer of his mind into Andy's body. The sorcerer tries to make Andy drink a potion he brews, but having gone so long without his medication, the boy collapses into a coma. Led by Porridge, Sapphire discovers Cawdroc's cave. The puppy leaps at Cawdroc again, and the sorcerer falls back, knocking himself out. Steel joins them, and they all return to the 20th Century, Time and its minion Cawdroc having been thwarted.

Andy is returned to his parents, and in the morning, they will all believe it was just a dream. Meanwhile, Sapphire and Steel use their powers to collapse the roof of Cawdroc's cave so that nobody else can stumble across it and release him again, leaving just an earth-filled depression in the forest floor.

TRIGGERS

There doesn't seem to be a trigger as such, other than Andy's discovery of Cawdroc's cave. This releases the sorcerer so he can take the boy back to his own time where he can prepare him to be the vessel of his powers.

IRREGULARITIES

Cawdroc is a powerful sorcerer from the 9th Century who had a fearful reputation in his time. As with other wielders of magic in the comic-strips, the limits of his powers are ill defined. He can open dimensional portals, travel through time, brew magical potions and fire blasts of energy capable of stripping flesh from bone. What else is he capable of?

Cawdroc is a servant of Time. If we want to try to explain away his magical abilities in terms more in keeping with *Sapphire & Steel*, we could say that his spells are merely the manifestation of powers granted to him by Time itself.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

The first few pages of this strip are interesting in that they depict Sapphire and Steel in an eerie, misty environment sensing that something is about to happen that will require their intervention. Is this the elementals' own realm? They don't seem to be receiving an assignment briefing but are acting on their own initiative.

KNIGHT'S CHARGER

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 8, Coordination 3, Awareness 3
SKILLS: Athletics 3, Fighting 2, Survival 1
TRAITS: Fast (Major), Trample (Strength damage if it runs over smaller creatures), Tough

KNIGHT

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletics 3 (AoE: Horsemanship), Convince 2, Fighting 4, Marksmanship 2, Survival 1

TRAITS
Authority (Minor)
Brave
Noble
Obligation (Major) – His lord
Silver Spoon
Voice of Authority

EQUIPMENT
Chainmail Armour (3 points)
Shield (+3 Armour if the knight succeeds at a contest of Coordination + Fighting against his opponent)
Broadsword: Strength +2 damage
Lance: Horse's Speed +4 damage, can only be used during a charge

TECH LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 3-5

In this story, Sapphire and Steel are able to travel through time independently of each other and without any external assistance such as triggers. We finally have to bite the bullet and admit that, unlike in the TV series, some elementals have this ability in the comics, though purchased outside the Elemental Agent

trait. If they don't, they're paying 8 Story Points per scene for the temporary use of Vortex.

Sapphire is still the dominant character in the partnership, telling Steel that she is more suited to go back in time, as his use of force might endanger Andy. However, Steel quickly disregards her instructions and follows her. This is to the story's benefit, as he's finally shown to do something and ends up in a sword-fight against a group of knights.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The comic-strip returns to *Look-In* after a three month absence, and we're back in the realms of magic. In fact, with only one or two exceptions, "Season Two" of the *Look-In* strip moves even further away from *Sapphire & Steel*'s usual remit, with tales of sorcery, demons, elves and the Pied Piper!

Setting aside the fantastical elements and the inconsistency with time travel, the story is a straightforward one. From the players' perspective, Sapphire and Steel don't catch up with Cawdroc until the final page, the rest of the tale being a drawn out pursuit. The GM could easily change this aspect by having a few extra obstacles though. And giving Steel a slice of the action for a change is welcome.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Cawdroc:** An evil 9th Century sorcerer and a servant of Time. Wants to live again by transferring his will into a boy's body.
- **Andy Ellington:** Convalescing in the country from a bad illness; has a new puppy called Porridge. Needs to take regular medication for his illness.
- **Andy's parents:** Henry and his unnamed wife dote on their son.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Despite his magical trappings, Cawdroc is a proper villain who deserves a return appearance, though perhaps in the present day this time.

THE HAUNTING OF FARSTANGER MILL

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #38-44

SYNOPSIS

In the former industrial town of Scanforth, protestors are trying to prevent the demolition of the old Farstanger Mill which is significant to the history of the area. Tempers fray, and soon the protestors are fighting with the demolition workers.

In the mill, Sapphire and Steel appear as if from nowhere. Sapphire can sense that in this place, time is coiled, just waiting for its chance to spring free. They spot the ghost-like form of a loom-child who was little more than a slave in the mill's Victorian past. When Sapphire confronts it, the child emits a weird, unearthly scream that causes brickwork to collapse on the elementals. Steel pulls Sapphire to safety, but the child vanishes before their eyes.

Outside, the fight is broken up by the police, who tell the protesters to disperse, and the bulldozers start to demolish the mill. But Tommy Day, the fourteen-year-old son of one of the protesters, is missing, and Sapphire and Steel realise that Time has beaten them to it and snatched the boy away. They believe that the violence of the fight was the trigger that Time needed, and that it now has a link to the present, perhaps even away from the site of the mill.

Less than ten minutes later, a fight breaks out between two of the demolition workers, who are influenced by the hidden presence of both Tommy and the loom-child. The fight is broken

TIME-CHILD

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**7**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**0**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 4, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Senses – Homes in on anger
Distinctive
Hypnosis (Major)
Immaterial (Special Bad)
Psychic
Telekinesis
Telepathy
Weakness (Major) – Can be banished by concentrated goodness

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 8

DEMONSTRATORS ANXIOUS TO PRESERVE SCANFORTH'S GRIM VICTORIAN MILL CLASH WITH DEMOLITION WORKERS, AND POLICE ARRIVE TO BREAK UP THE FIGHT...

TOMMY DAY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Marksman 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Enslaved – Has fallen under the Time-child's control
Run for Your Life!

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

up by other workers, and Tommy and the Time-child have disappeared before Sapphire and Steel can do anything.

Sapphire and Steel go and tell Tommy's mother what has happened to him. She struggles to believe them, but Steel insists the Time-child could use Tommy to turn up anywhere. They need to know where Tommy goes, which school he attends, where he plays. With that information, the elementals reason that the school is the likeliest place he and the Time-child will resurface, but that won't be until the following morning. In the meantime, they go to check the mill once again.

The mill is now partly demolished, and the workers have knocked off for the day. Sapphire and Steel discuss why Time has used this place, its history of oppression and misery, a place of cruelty where people, including children, slaved from dawn to dusk for a pittance.

Unseen by Sapphire and Steel, Tommy and the Time-child are also lurking here. The Time-child uses its powers to activate a bulldozer which lumbers towards Sapphire and Steel, trapping them against a wall. Sapphire tries to use her powers to freeze time, but the will of the Time-child is too strong for her. The pair seem doomed until the floor gives way beneath the bulldozer and it tumbles into a long-forgotten underground vault, the remains of a medieval monastery.

As Tommy and the Time-child escape again, Sapphire's clothing unexpectedly changes into a nun's habit, and she orders Steel to be silent. Spectres in the form of monks appear in the vault, and Sapphire quickly returns to normal. The elementals are unsure what has just happened, but they mustn't lose sight of their objective.

SALLY DAY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Athletics 1

TRAITS
Face in the Crowd

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 2

Tommy and the Time-child head to Tommy's school to wait for it to open the next day, when they will make the children fight to the death!

Sapphire and Steel are at a loss as to what to do, as it's clear the Time-child is more powerful than them. Without warning, Sapphire starts to slap Steel to get the attention of their enemy. She runs and Steel races after her, his anger now real. Sapphire leads him back to Farstanger Mill, where Tommy's little sister Sally is hiding in the rubble. She wants to help, but the Time-child gets Tommy to throw a brick at her. Steel catches the missile with a bare hand before it can hit the girl.

Sapphire suddenly turns and runs, leading Steel and Sally to the underground vault the bulldozer uncovered. She uses Sally, an innocent child, to communicate with the spirits of the monks, which are a concentrated form of good. Sapphire's clothing changes into a nun's habit again and, although the monks cannot hear her, they can hear Sally. Through the girl, Sapphire tells the monks about the Time-child and that it must be returned to its own time.

The monks fade away, but there is the sound of the chanting of an old Latin ritual which dissipates the form of the Time-child, sending it back to its own era. Sapphire and Steel find Tommy, who has fainted, and they carry him home, now free of the evil influence.

S TRIGGERS

The trigger is partly the old mill, a place of injustice and misery which has left a psychic stain on the location. But Time has been waiting, "coiled" as Sapphire puts it, for the second part of the trigger to release it: the violence of the fight between the demolition workers and the protestors who want to preserve a historical building.

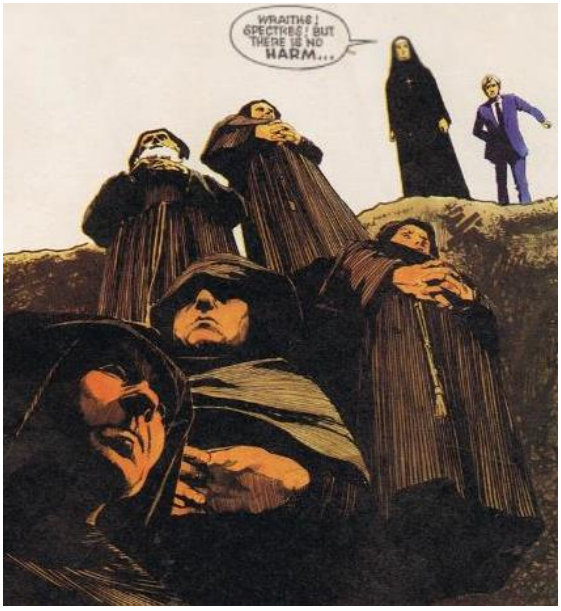
Once the coil has sprung and the Time-child appears, it encourages more and more violence which helps it thrive. Left unchecked, the violence could eventually engulf the world.

S IRREGULARITIES

Time manifests as the ghost-like form of a Victorian child – initially termed a slave, slave-child or loom-child, the story soon settles on calling it the Time-child. It's an intangible (though visible) presence. It can influence the behaviour of humans, and takes control of Tommy Day for any interaction with the physical world and for local information.

The Time-child is a manifestation of the evil force of Time, by now a well-known phrase for the enemies Sapphire and Steel face in the comic-strips. In this case, though, it feels as if it's pure evil and is eventually defeated by the monks' Latin ritual, the power of goodness.

The monks aren't presented as irregularities for Sapphire and Steel to handle. In fact, they're an odd inclusion that aren't really explained, leaving the reader to assume they're supernatural spirits. In terms of *Sapphire & Steel*, we could regard them as being the same as the "ghosts" from *Assignment II*, i.e. reactivated personae that persist in the atmosphere after death (see *Sapphire & Steel Have Been Assigned!*).



SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

When she and Steel first arrive at the mill, Sapphire senses the vibrations of the Time-force just before the Time-child appears.

When the Time-child directs the bulldozer towards them, Sapphire tries to freeze time, but the Time-child's will is too powerful for hers. Her appearance automatically changes into that of a nun when the bulldozer crashes through the floor and reveals the ghostly monks, and later when she communicates with them via Sally.

Steel has a couple of moments of action in this story. He pulls Sapphire clear of collapsing brickwork in the mill and catches a thrown brick in mid-air with one hand, a rare comic-strip example of his enhanced strength. Later, Sapphire makes him angry by repeatedly slapping his face and it seems that he genuinely intends to do her harm before calming down again.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

After a foray into the realms of magic, we're back with a story that would be right at home in the TV series. There's also a level of social commentary which is quite sophisticated for a children's comic: Time utilises the anger and resentment of the injustices of Victorian factories and child labour. There's also the conflict between progress and history, and the scenes of the fighting between protestors and works (and it being broken up by police) are reminiscent of the miners' strike of the 1980s - though that would still be several years in the future. Still, the GM could use any or all of these to include layers of subtext in the assignment.

Mid-story, Sapphire and Steel realise that the Time-child is too powerful for them to defeat, much as they realised with the Darkness in *Assignment II* and the time-creature in *Assignment III*. In the former case, they had to sacrifice an innocent, Tully; and in the latter, they just sent the creature back to the future for the scientists who created it to deal with. With the Time-child, they are fortunate that its actions revealed the presence of the ghostly monks, a powerful force of good. But what would a group of players do if these weren't included in the adventure?

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Tommy Day:** Fourteen year old boy who has fallen under the control of the Time-child.
- **Sally Day:** Tommy's younger sister. Wants to help get her brother back, despite Sapphire and Steel not wishing to put her in danger.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The idea of cruelty, misery and injustice being triggers for Time to break through isn't quite a new one (see *Assignment II* for a similar set up), but it can be used to resurrect people from other historical periods who have suffered and want some sort of revenge. How about Roman slaves killed for disobeying their masters, or Africans who died while being transported to the Americas?

THE MASK OF M'GANGA

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #45-49

SYNOPSIS

Towards the end of the 19th Century, legendary explorer Lionel Archibald Twain undertook an exploration of the heart of Africa still untouched by Europeans. It is said that he perished somewhere near the Congo River in single combat with a powerful tribal shaman, M'Ganga, with both falling to their deaths over a cliff. The story of Twain's exploits – and his reputation as a tyrant - have been told and retold in the family for generations, with his great-great-grandson Nick hearing of him from his father.

Nick and his father head to Sparkstone Museum in the English Midlands to see what they have on Lionel in their collection. While his father goes to find the curator, Nick spots a large African shaman's mask. As he examines it closely, he talks to himself and mentions his family's name. The mask begins to glow, and Nick Twain is dragged away through time and space. Sapphire and Steel hurry in, but they're too late as Time has already taken the boy. Quickly, Sapphire uses her tactile perception on the mask to determine where he has gone and senses almost overwhelming evil!

Nick finds himself alone in a dense jungle ninety years in the past. Calling out for help, a reply comes from a monstrous face in the bark of a nearby tree trunk. It is Time. It tells Nick that it will act as his guide to retrace his ancestor's footsteps. With Nick's aid, it will wreak havoc and change the world! Suddenly, Lionel's bearers appear. They see Nick as his great-great-grandfather, and it is Lionel's words, not Nick's, that come out of the boy's mouth as he berates the men for tardiness.

In the museum, Sapphire lays one hand on the mask and holds Steel's hand with her other, and the pair are transported to central Africa in 1890. They know about Lionel Twain's fatal fight against the shaman and that Time wants the battle to be refought so that M'Ganga survives to perform black magic that will affect the entire history of the world. Without warning, a leopard leaps from a tree at Sapphire. She turns time back ten seconds and freezes it, then gives the beast a powerful two-handed whack with a tree branch. The leopard retreats into the jungle.

Half a mile ahead, Nick/Lionel and the bearers have reached a deep gorge. The only way over is via a log lying across the drop, but the bearers are too fearful to cross it as they know it's dangerous. Lionel harangues the men before starting across. Although Nick is afraid, Time speaks to him through the log, reassuring him that it needs him alive. Reaching the other side, Nick/Lionel is held at spear-point by hostile tribesmen led by the shaman M'Ganga, who proclaims himself to be the Lord of Death!

Although Nick tries to speak up, nobody can hear him, and it's Lionel who challenges M'Ganga to single combat. The shaman

NICK TWAIN

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Insatiable Curiosity

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

accepts. Speaking to Nick from a twisted face formed in the jungle canopy, Time tells the boy that only he must die in the coming fight; M'Ganga must survive. As the fight begins at the top of a rocky peak, M'Ganga pulls a handful of live venomous snakes from the crown of his mask and flings them at Nick/Lionel.

In the jungle below, Sapphire and Steel see Twain's terrified bearers fleeing. The voice of Time itself threatens them from a tree trunk. It summons a troop of gorillas to block their path. But apart from some territorial posturing, they don't attack, and Sapphire and Steel are able to move on.

On the rocky peak, M'Ganga knocks his opponent to the ground. Originally, Lionel sprang up and grabbed the shaman, taking them both over the edge. This time, M'Ganga picks Nick up before he can recover and

LIONEL TWAIN

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletic 2, Convince 3, Fighting 4 (AoE: Boxing), Knowledge 3, Marksman 3, Survival 5

TRAITS
Argumentative
Brave
Prejudice (Minor) – Non-Whites
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 6

prepares to throw him to his death. Sapphire and Steel appear in the nick of time, and Sapphire freezes the scene. It is M'Ganga who topples to his death alone.

With Time's hold broken, the shaman's mask falls through time and space. Sapphire, Steel and Nick find themselves back in Sparkstone Museum in 1980 where Nick doesn't recall a thing about his adventure.

TRIGGERS

M'Ganga's mask is the trigger, but it doesn't activate until Nick, a direct descendant of Lionel Twain, speaks the family name close to it.

IRREGULARITIES

Time itself appears in this story in the form of faces in the trees and forest canopy, and speaks both to Nick and to Sapphire and Steel. The imagery is very effective, with the features being twisted and menacing.

M'Ganga is Time's agent. He is repeatedly described as having command of "satanic powers", but there's no evidence to support this in the story. The most magical thing he does is produce several live snakes to throw at Lionel, but he's been carrying these on top of his headdress. We can only assume that Time is correct about M'Ganga's powers.

WHO IS THIS IMPUDENT STRANGER WHO DARES TO QUESTION THE MIGHT OF M'GANGA..?
KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD OF DEATH...
THEN, FROM THE DEEP THICKETS...

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire uses her "tactile perception" on M'Ganga's mask to determine where and when Nick has been taken to. This seems to be a version of the spot analysis she does in the TV series (using her Alien Senses trait).

Sapphire and Steel are again able to travel through time (with help from the mask), and Sapphire both reverses and freezes time.

Steel yet again takes a back seat in this story, and it's Sapphire rather than he who hits the leopard (after freezing time to do so, admittedly). A wasted opportunity given Steel's strength and resistance to injury.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

Racial stereotyping, pejorative terms such as "witch-doctor" and a reductive approach to the depiction of Africans make this story problematic for a modern audience. In mitigation, Lionel Twain isn't a heroic figure, and at one point Steel says to Sapphire "*Everything that happened when Europeans took over this African continent wasn't good*", a relatively enlightened view for 1980. But it's far too little to redeem the strip's failings. The GM should address this before presenting the story as an assignment for their players.

It's a shame, as there are a couple of nice ideas to be had. The addition of natural threats such as the leopard and the gorillas makes a change for *Sapphire & Steel*. A setting beyond the usual English towns and countryside is also refreshing, including seeing Sapphire and Steel as pith-helmeted explorers, and the artwork includes some of the best of the entire series. The GM can emphasise the details of the exotic locale – the sights, sounds, smells, discomfort, heat and humidity - to get the most of it.

As for the story itself, Sapphire and Steel don't actually catch up with the main action until the final page of the strip, when they suddenly appear and Sapphire yet again freezes time to save the day – a feat by now hugely over-used in the comics. Along the way though, they have a couple of moments of danger. But for a group of players, it would probably be highly

M'GANGA

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**5**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 5, Fighting 4, Knowledge 2, Marksman 2, Medicine 3, Subterfuge 5, Survival 2

TRAITS
Distinctive
Fear Factor 1
Healer
Magic Spells - see page 30
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 10

unsatisfactory, and the GM would need to add a few more complications to the mix.

One of the big differences between the comic-strips and the TV stories is that, in the TV stories, Sapphire and Steel don't immediately know what's wrong. They have to work out what the irregularities are and identify the trigger. In the comic-strips, they often have this information when they arrive or, as in this story, they quickly acquire it. There is little of the air of mystery in their assignments. So game adventures based on the comic-strip

LEOPARD

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 5, Coordination 4, Awareness 5
SKILLS: Athletics 3, Fighting 3, Subterfuge 5, Survival 4
TRAITS: Camouflage (+2 bonus to hide in foliage), Climbing (Minor), Fast (Major), Fear Factor 1, Keen Senses (Major), Lurker (Gains a +2 bonus on ambush attacks if it wins a contest of Coordination + Subterfuge + Camouflage against its target's Awareness + Survival), Natural Weapon (Minor: Teeth and Claws – Strength +2 damage)

GORILLA

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 8, Coordination 4, Awareness 3
SKILLS: Athletics 1, Fighting 3, Survival 4
TRAITS: Fear Factor 1, Frenzy, Keen Senses (Minor: Smell), Tough

VENOMOUS SNAKE

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 1, Coordination 5, Awareness 4
SKILLS: Athletics 1, Fighting 2, Subterfuge 5, Survival 4
TRAITS: Alien Senses (Heat and vibration sense; scent tasting), Climbing (Minor), Natural Weapon (Special: Poisonous Bite – Strength damage, ignores the first 2 point of Armour; if even a single point does damage, the victim takes an additional 4(2/4/6) points), Size: Tiny (Major)

stories could easily be expanded and improved by not letting the players have this information up front. This would add a mystery to solve before they can set about defeating Time. In the case of *The Mask of M'Ganga*, Sapphire and Steel would arrive at the museum, but they wouldn't initially know that anyone has disappeared, nor that the mask is the source of the problem. There could be threats to overcome here before they even make it to Africa and 1890.

Additionally, having the shaman as the villain is not only a stereotype but also a very obvious one. Why not make M'Ganga one of the good guys, or at the very least a red herring, with Time's agent being another, far more innocuous character, and the players have to work out who?

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **M'Ganga:** Tribal shaman who proclaims himself the Lord of Death. Agent of Time. Whether he has genuine magical powers is unclear from his actions, but Time is presumably correct about this.
- **Nick Twain:** Great-great-grandson of Lionel Twain, interested in his ancestor's adventures.
- **Lionel Archibald Twain:** Victorian explorer who explored central Africa and died in 1890. A martinet with the men under him. Boxed at Oxford.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The concept of Time inhabiting and speaking through normally inanimate objects is a good one and allows it to menace Sapphire and Steel directly. What else could Time inhabit in such a way? Artwork? Clocks? Electronics?

A CHRISTMAS DEVIL

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1980) #50-52 & Vol.11 (1981) #1-4

SYNOPSIS

In 1864, in his dank basement in Seven Dials in London, evil sorcerer Zebediah Clench attempts to summon a demon, but the ancient spells do not work. Then, the voice of Time speaks to him from his stuffed owl. It offers to assist Clench in achieving his aims.

In the yellow smog outside, Sapphire and Steel materialise, having detected the vibrations of an evil force. But it has already gone so they abandon their search.

In December 1980, Dr Leonard Harding and his wife take their children Jason and Sarah to the recently re-opened New Penny Theatre in South-West London to see a festive performance of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Behind the scenes, neither the actor playing the Ghost of Christmas Past nor his understudy have turned up. Nevertheless, the figure of the Ghost takes the stage. As the Ghost gestures, everyone in the theatre is frozen in time. It proclaims itself to be the embodiment of evil, here to honour its promise to assist Zebediah Clench. It identifies Sarah and Jason as ideal for its plans and leads them up onto the stage, where the props and painted scenery become reality.

JASON & SARAH HARDING

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Craft (Singing) 2

TRAITS
Run for Your Life!

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2 each

Sapphire and Steel arrive seconds too late, as Time has already transported the children away. Steel grasps Sapphire's hand to provide her with his strength in order to re-start time in the theatre. As the plays haltingly resumes, Steel fetches Dr Harding from the audience. The elementals tell him that Time has snatched his children away, and that only they can bring them back.

Jason and Sarah are now in London in 1864, where the figure that took them has changed its appearance to that of a top-hatted gentleman, the better to blend in. It tells them that they are to be the slaves of Zebediah Clench. When it hands them over to the sorcerer, Time vanishes but the voice from the stuffed owl tells Clench that it will be watching.

ZEBEDIAH CLENCH

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3 (AoE: Occult), Science 1, subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Minor) – Sorcerer
Impoverished
Obsession (Major) – Desires power
Repulsive
Summon – Time gives Clench the power to summon demons and similar entities

EQUIPMENT
Billy Club: Stun or Strength +1 damage

TECH LEVEL: 4 **STORY POINTS:** 4

In 1980, Sapphire and Steel are at the home of Dr Harding. They need something important to both Sarah and Jason to hold onto and select a small Christmas tree that the children have started decorating. With the tree as a focus and the concentration of both elementals' minds, Sapphire takes Steel and herself back to 1864, where they materialise in Victorian clothing. A policeman tells Sapphire and Steel that he saw two children in the company of a gent, so they head in the direction he indicates.

In his basement, Clench locks the children in a small anteroom while he decides what to do with them. But he returns with a billy club when Jason tries to kick the door down. As Clench opens the door, Jason bursts out and knocks him off his feet, allowing them both to escape into the snowy lanes outside.

Sapphire and Steel spot the fleeing children but are obstructed by a couple of drunks until Sapphire freezes time. But Jason and Sarah are outside the scope of her power. The children duck inside an open doorway and find themselves in the house of a family frozen in time while eating their Christmas dinner. Famished, the pair help themselves to some food just as Sapphire's influence wears off and time starts again. The children are grabbed, but the family then assumes they're from a group of strolling players who have been performing at the Adelaide Theatre. Theatrical people are considered lucky, so Jason and Sarah are given seats at the table. After, they have to sing for their supper, but their song about motor cars and buses makes very little sense to the family! Fleeing outside again, Jason and Sarah almost immediately bump into Clench.

Sapphire and Steel have lost all trace of the children in the lanes and alleys of Seven Dials, until they spot a 50p piece from 1980 in the snow. Sapphire uses her powers on the coin and senses a foul-smelling basement.

Meanwhile, in that very basement, Clench has produced a potion which he wants the children to drink so that they can tell him the future. He intends to raise demons and summon the Lords of Hell. The disembodied voice of Time tells Clench that it will then communicate with these forces of evil and turn England into the Devil's own domain!

Sapphire and Steel are getting close. They encounter an old woman, Granny Slyme, who has the second sight. She tells them that the children are with Zebediah Clench. Sapphire changes the 50p coin into a Victorian sovereign

and gives it to the woman. But Granny Slyme was Time in another of its guises, and it has sent them into a trap.

Clench has forced Sarah and Jason to drink his potion. Now Time in its disembodied form harnesses the contents of their brains to assist Clench's experiments. This time, the sorcerer's spell works and a demonic figure appears before him in clouds of stinking sulphur. It is the Devil's Archangel of Death!

Time warns Clench of Sapphire and Steel's imminent arrival just as they burst into the basement. The Archangel commands Clench to kill them. Sapphire freezes time, but the Archangel is unaffected so Steel distracts the demon by attacking it.

Sapphire realises that Time is housed within the stuffed owl, so she hurls it into Clench's brazier which overturns. With Time defeated, the demon is free to take Clench as a sacrifice for its master and grasps his throat in its talons. As the basement is engulfed in flames, Sapphire takes herself, Steel and the two children back to 1980. The children fall asleep, exhausted from their ordeal, and Sapphire and Steel tell Dr Harding that they must believe that it was all a dream.

THE ARCHANGEL OF DEATH

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**8**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**10**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Fighting 4, Knowledge 3

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance
Armour (10 points)
Environmental (Major)
Fear Factor 3
Immortal (Major)
Immunity – Immune to time manipulation
Indomitable
Natural Weapon (Minor) – Talons:
Strength +2 damage
Teleport
Weakness (Major) – May be bound by powerful magic

TECH LEVEL: All **STORY POINTS:** 12

TRIGGERS

There isn't really a trigger as such in this story, unless it is Zebediah Clench's failed attempt to summon a demon which resulted in him opening a breach for Time.

After its initial summoning, Clench's stuffed owl becomes Time's focus, and its disembodied voice speaks through the bird, its eyes glowing red as it does so.

IRREGULARITIES

Time is again the underlying threat in this story, and for once, it takes physical form. It can change its appearance, from the Ghost of Christmas Past, to a Victorian gentleman, to Granny Slyme. It also freezes time and is able to transport itself and the children from 1980 to 1864. Time also occupies Clench's stuffed owl and speaks to him through it. Use Time's stats from *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* for this aspect of it, but replace its Immaterial trait with Shapeshift (Special).

Zebediah Clench becomes Time's agent. Whether he originally had any real magical powers is dubious, but he gains them with Time's influence.

Finally, we are introduced to the Archangel of Death. It doesn't appear at all like a traditional archangel, perhaps not surprising for a servant of the Devil himself. It's a massive, reptilian figure with scaled armour and prodigious claws. It seems to be a formidable physical threat but we don't see any magical, psychic or other unusual abilities. As is traditional for demons, it can be summoned and bound by magic rituals and requires sacrifices for its master. But it is immune to time being frozen.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire and Steel are both capable of sensing the vibrations of the evil force of Time. For Sapphire, this is part of her core abilities; for Steel this isn't.

There are a couple of occasions when Steel adds his strength to Sapphire's willpower (presumably using his Story Points to help her achieve feats with her abilities): firstly, to re-start time in the theatre in 1980; and secondly, to take them both back to 1864. In both cases, it requires physical contact between them.

Sapphire reads a 50p coin dropped by one of the children and later transforms it into a sovereign.

Steel finally has a chance for some physical action when he fights the demon. It's a powerful foe though, and he doesn't seem to be able to harm it, even wielding Clench's billy club with his enhanced strength.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

With this story, we're another step removed from the TV series. While Zebediah Clench's magical abilities, such as they are, could be attributed to Time granting him its powers, we also have demons to contend with. Not only that, but the demon is described as being the Devil's own Archangel of Death, making Satan also a reality in this continuity. This may be a step too far for some GMs and players; but for others, well why not include demons and devils in the pantheon of Sapphire and Steel's foes?

Another period story the artist has fun with, depicting Sapphire and Steel in Victorian clothing (including a top hat for Steel). The grime and poverty of the narrow alleys almost make a character out of London itself, while the Christmas season can also be emphasised in both time periods.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Zebediah Clench:** A Victorian sorcerer, but one whose magical prowess seems limited until the input of Time. A repugnant, evil man living in squalor in a basement in Seven Dials in Camden.
- **Jason and Sarah Harding:** Brother and sister from 1980. Resourceful and remarkably brave considering the circumstances they find themselves in.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The introduction of demonic entities opens up possibilities. Perhaps Satan himself would be suitable as an alternative major recurring foe in place of Time.

GRONANDYL

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1981) #5-13

SYNOPSIS

Aboard a North Sea ferry from Gothenburg to Tilbury, brother and sister Tristan and Catherine Pendleton and their father are returning home from a holiday in Sweden. The children are reading a book of Swedish folk tales and spot a picture which includes a "sheepy-pipe" similar to panpipes, the same as Tristan bought in a Swedish junkshop. Tristan blows the pipe, making a sort of "not there" sound, and the children vanish. Sapphire and Steel arrive just too late, finding only the book and the sheepy-pipe. Time has already taken the children! Sapphire tries to read the pipe with her powers, but she sees nothing. How can they rescue the children when they don't even know where they've gone?

Tristan and Catherine find themselves in a different dimension, a different era, the domain of Time itself. This is the land of Gronandyl, exactly as in the children's book. They are greeted by a group of Dwarves who intend to take them to meet Magisfard the Archklayne. The Dwarves tell them that this is the past that mere men do not know.

Back on the ferry, Sapphire realises that the children have been taken to the Closed Centuries, hundreds of years erased from mankind's history. In the Closed Centuries way back in the dim mists of history, the land of Gronandyl lay where the North Sea is now. It was peopled by the Dwarves of Elgisglayde, who were ruled by Magisfard the Archklayne and who waged bitter war against the Elves, the People of Kur, while human-like slaves called Menyul watched on in fear. But deep in the hills, the wise wizards formed the Conference of Halga. The wisest of all, Septurin, decided that to save the Earth, Gronandyl must be sunk without trace into the sea, and all memory of it erased. By sorcerous means, a mighty earthquake sank the land.

It is to this land shortly before the cataclysm destroys it that the evil force of Time has brought Catherine and Tristan. They are taken to the castle of the Archklayne, where they are welcomed as it has been foretold that these children from the future are destined to help the Dwarves. But although they cannot see it, an invisible, faerie-like Time-demon, one of Time's messengers, hovers at Magisfard's shoulder, whispering in his ear. It knows that the children can cancel the power of the wizards, and the Archklayne's line will reign supreme forever.

CATHERINE & TRISTAN PENDLETON

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Face in the Crowd

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2 each

MAGISFARD THE ARCHKLAYNE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) – Elves
Authority (Major)
Dark Secret (Major) – Pawn of Time
Distinctive
Tough
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 6

Sapphire believes she can get to Gronandyl by blowing the pipe, but Steel might not be able to accompany her. She does so and finds herself promptly attacked by a group of Dwarves who believe her to be an escaped Menyul slave. Although she puts up a good fight, Sapphire is overpowered and wakes up to find herself locked up with genuine Menyuls. She realises that they are little more than animals.

Meanwhile, Tristan and Catherine are being treated as honoured guests by Magisfard, who promises to give them a pair of sinnets, creatures resembling horned ponies, if they're good.

The Menyuls show Sapphire a hidden trapdoor into a secret tunnel. After half an hour's stumbling through the dark, she reaches an exit, but it's blocked by an armed and armoured figure, diminutive like the Dwarves. This is an Elf of Kul. Sapphire suddenly receives a telepathic communication from Steel, who is about to join her in Gronandyl.

Elsewhere, the magicians of Gronandyl are gathering for the Conference of Halga to decide the fate of the land and end the eternal conflict between the Dwarves and the Elves. Magisfard's crystal-gazers have told him what Septurin intends to do, and the Time-demon

SEPTURIN

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 6, Medicine 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 2

TRAITS
Authority (Major)
Distinctive - Pointy ears
Special – Magic Spells: see page 30

TECH LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 10

TIME-DEMON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**5/3***	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**1/5***

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 4, Fighting 4, Subterfuge 5/1*

*First number is for its faerie form; the second is for its hobgoblin form.

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance
Shapeshift (Major) – Can shift between faerie and hobgoblin form

Faerie form also has **Flight (Major)** and **Size: Tiny (Major)**
Hobgoblin form also has **Fear Factor 1** and **Tough**

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 6

tells him he must take over the minds of the two children as they are the instruments with which he can defeat the wizards.

With Steel having joined Sapphire, the Elf intends to take the elementals to meet his commander. The Elves are about to attack a Dwarf outpost. Sapphire tells him they're not interested in their war, but the three of them are ambushed by a Dwarf riding a sinnet. As a fight begins, the Dwarf proclaims that his Archklayne has the aid of infants from the future. Sapphire and Steel know who he means and quickly break up the fight. They send the Elf on his way and make the Dwarf take them to Magisfard, whom he says is in league with demons. They realise the Dwarf means Time!

As the Dwarf, on foot now, leads them across the countryside, they are attacked by a flock of Shandryks, flesh-eating birds like vultures with bestial heads. Sapphire freezes time to allow herself and Steel to escape. But they have heard an alarm horn being sounded from Magisfard's castle so the Dwarves will already be on high alert. The elementals only just manage to get inside the castle when time unfreezes and they're spotted.

The Time-demon tells Magisfard that it will deal with the intruders while the Archklayne goes to place the children under his control. The demon-faerie catches up with Sapphire and changes into a new, fiendish form like that of a hobgoblin.

In the Hills of Keth, the Conference of Halga begins with Septurin laying out his plans to drown Gronandyl.

DWARF WARRIOR

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 3, Ingenuity 3, Presence 3, Resolve 4, Strength 3
SKILLS: Athletics 2, Fighting 3, Marksman 3, Subterfuge 1, Survival 4
TRAITS: Adversary (Minor: Elves), Distinctive, Tough
EQUIPMENT: Armour (2 points); sword or spear – Strength +2 damage
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 2-4

ELF SOLDIER

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 4, Coordination 4, Ingenuity 3, Presence 3, Resolve 3, Strength 2
SKILLS: Athletics 3, Fighting 3, Marksman 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2
TRAITS: Adversary (Minor: Dwarves), Distinctive
EQUIPMENT: Armour (3 points); sword or spear – Strength +2 damage
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: 2
STORY POINTS: 2-4

Outside Magisfard's castle, the army of the Elves of Kur arrives determined on a death-or-glory assault on the Dwarves. With them is a renegade wizard called Judak who has developed gunpowder. As the Time-demon attacks Sapphire, the first ever cannon-shot collapses a wall onto the creature, killing it.

In the castle's Magick Room, the children are being prepared so that their minds from the future can be used to battle those of the wizards who, at this very moment, are agreeing to Septurin's plan.

Sapphire and Steel break into the Magick Room to stop Magisfard just as the wizards' earthquake begins. The Archklayne is killed as the castle collapses and, all over Gronandyl, the land sinks and the seas rush in, destroying everything. Nothing survives.

Back in the future aboard the North Sea ferry, Catherine and Tristan awake believing they've shared a dream. Sapphire and Steel know it's for the best.

TRIGGERS

The trigger is the "sheepy-pipe" that Tristan bought in a junkshop in Stockholm. The shop's owner said that it might be very old. When blown, it took the children to Gronandyl, but that might be because they also had a book of Swedish folk-tales which seems to recall the lost land. Being in the North Sea also helped.

Sapphire also used the pipe to get to Gronandyl, but the elementals didn't believe that Steel could also do so. However, he later appeared in Gronandyl without explanation, so he presumably was able to use the pipe after all.

IRREGULARITIES

Time, represented by its messenger the Time-demon in this story, is once again the threat. The Time-demon has two forms: its main one

is a small, invisible, faerie-like creature that whispers in Magisfard's ear; the other is a fiendish figure like a hobgoblin.

MENYUL SLAVE

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 3, Ingenuity 1, Presence 1, Resolve 2, Strength 3
SKILLS: Fighting 1, Subterfuge 1
TRAITS: Enslaved, Tough
TECHNOLOGY LEVEL: 1
STORY POINTS: 1-2

SHANDRYK

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 3, Coordination 4, Awareness 4
SKILLS: Athletics 2, Fighting 3, Survival 5
TRAITS: Fear Factor 1, Flight (Major)

SINNET

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 6, Coordination 4, Awareness 3
SKILLS: Athletics 4
TRAITS: Fast (Minor), Trample (does Strength damage if it runs over an opponent)

Magisfard, the Archklayne of the Dwarves, is in the thrall of Time. He sometimes mutters to himself as he talks to the Time-demon, and he often seems to be under mental strain.

The continued existence of Gronandyl is an irregularity of sorts, as the war between the Dwarves and the Elves would destroy the entire Earth if it were not sunk into the sea by the wizards' magic and all memory of it removed from the minds of mankind.

GRONANDYL

Gronandyl is a magical land which once existed where the North Sea is now. It's populated by two main races: the Dwarves of Elgisglayde ruled by Magisfard, and the Elves of Kur. Both are shorter in stature than humans, but the Dwarves are stockier. Dwarves and Elves have been at war with each other for centuries. Both races use animals known as sinnets as steeds. These are similar to ponies but have short, curled horns like small rams' horns.

There is also a human-like race called Menyuls. They're a primitive people with limited intelligence and only a rudimentary grasp of language. Menyuls are used as slaves by the Dwarves and possibly also by the Elves.

Finally, there are the High Wizards in the Hills of Keth. They look almost human but have pointed ears. They wield powerful magic and stand outside the war. Their leader is Septurin.

Of the wild beasts of Gronandyl, wanderers need to be wary of Shandryks, also known as Flesh-Tearers. These large, vulture-like birds

have hideous but almost human heads and will attack any living thing.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Once again, Sapphire and Steel arrive just too late to stop Catherine and Tristan vanishing, something that has been happening a lot in recent stories!

Neither Sapphire nor Steel know much about Gronandyl other than as a legend. Sapphire isn't even able to read Tristan's sheepy-pipe to know where the children are.

Sapphire can use the sheepy-pipe to get to Gronandyl but there's some doubt whether Steel would be able to do the same (though he presumably manages it eventually).

In Gronandyl, Sapphire proves to be handy in a fight, beating up both Dwarves and Elves. Steel also does a bit of fighting, but he's written out of a couple of key sections of story. Firstly, when Sapphire first arrives in Gronandyl and is captured; and secondly, when they arrive at Magisfard's castle and only Sapphire can clamber through a window and has to face the Time-demon in its hobgoblin form alone.

In contrast to their recent period costumes (and their stylish clothing in the TV series), Sapphire and Steel are casually dressed in this story, both sporting blue tracksuits which may have been fashionable in the early 1980s.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is the longest of the *Look-In* comic-strips, with eighteen pages over nine issues. It's an epic tale and beautifully drawn, but it bears no resemblance to the TV series. We've had demons and sorcery in recent stories, but now we have full-on fantasy in the Tolkien tradition.

This may not be to all tastes, though it definitely widens the scope of adventures for Sapphire and Steel. There's also rather more fighting than we're used to, much of which involves Sapphire!

If a GM wants to rationalise Gronandyl in some way, it could possibly be considered an illusory reality created by Time to ensnare Sapphire and Steel, similar to the traps that Time created for Sapphire and Rob in *Assignment I*.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Catherine & Tristan Pendleton:** A pair of children about ten years old returning from holiday in Sweden. Interested in Swedish folk tales, they enjoy their time in Gronandyl, mistakenly believing Magisfard to be a kindly person.
- **Magisfard the Archklayne:** Ruler of the Dwarves of Elgisglayde. Unlike his fellow Dwarves, his skin has a green hue, and he shows signs of suffering from stress. Actually a puppet of Time trying to prevent the destruction of Gronandyl, which will doom the Earth.
- **Septurin:** One of the High Wizards of Gronandyl. He's a far-off presence in the story but is wise and benevolent.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The tale of Gronandyl is richly told and it's a place that could be home to many other adventures – if the GM and players can accept a fantasy setting for *Sapphire & Steel*!

THE PIED PIPER'S RETURN

PUBLICATION

Look-In Vol.10 (1981) #14-17

SYNOPSIS

In the Middle Ages, Sapphire and Steel faced and defeated the Pied Piper by smashing the sundial that was his way into reality. But he had already spirited the children of the German town of Hamelin away and they remain scattered in time.

Centuries later, Sapphire and Steel fear that the Piper is back. In 1980 in a town in the Midlands, teenager Jason Jackson and his friend Les are planning to see Tarquin, a band from London, perform at the local youth club. On the bus home from school, Jason starts his homework, reading a poem retelling the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, little knowing that Sapphire and Steel are sitting behind him. The

elementals know that he is one of the lost children of Hamelin, even though he doesn't

THE PIED PIPER

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**6**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 5, Craft (Music) 6, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Charming
Dependency (Major) - Requires a focus to enter and remain in our reality (originally the sundial, later unidentified – perhaps his flute?)
Distinctive
Hypnosis (Major) – Children and animals
Immortal (Major)
Immunity – Physical damage
Indomitable
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special)
Telepathy
Vortex
Weakness (Major) – Music can be used against the Piper, even just the ticking of a metronome or beat of a drum; reversing it sends him back in time

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 10

know this himself. They realise that Time has broken through again and will try to make contact with Jason, so they follow him to his foster home.

At the concert that evening, the band's lead singer Evil Eric is actually the Pied Piper. In the crowd, Jason's eyes turn red as he falls under the Piper's control again. Jason remembers his true past when Evil Eric grasps his hand and transforms into the Piper.

Sapphire and Steel arrive at the youth club but are refused entry by the manager. By the time Steel pushes past, it's too late. They find only the other confused band members, who tell Sapphire that everyone else vanished when Evil Eric whistled. She tries to use her psychic senses but, although she can see the children, she can't get a fix on them. She can sense that they're heading into oblivion, and that Time will use them to ensnare more and more children and bring the human race to an end.

With no other leads, Sapphire and Steel head back to where they defeated the Pied Piper before, to Hamelin in the Middle Ages.

The Piper has led the children into a distant dimension, where he tells Jason that Time itself will reward them with immortality. But the Piper knows the truth, that all but Time will die.

In Hamelin, Sapphire and Steel realise that the Piper hasn't arrived yet as the town is still plagued with rats. They head up to the sundial in the mountains, where they expect him to appear. But they find that the sundial isn't there and realise that Time has altered things. It's changed its pattern of operations so that the Piper isn't going to save Hamelin from the plague rats. Sapphire and Steel have no way of tracing the Piper and stopping him kidnapping more children!

Back in the 20th Century, the Piper poses as the lead singers of groups playing concerts in Japan, Australia and all over the world. At each concert, he plays his flute and he and all the children in the audience vanish.

Sapphire and Steel return to the 20th Century to find the book of poems that Jason was reading on the bus. Sapphire tries to scan it to determine where the boy is.

In his remote dimension, the Piper gloats that he has stolen thousands of children from all over the world. Suddenly, Sapphire and Steel appear. Sapphire produces a ticking metronome. As the Piper uses music as his weapon, so the metronome can be his enemy as she sets it to beat in reverse, going backwards faster and faster. The Pied Piper screams in fear as he's propelled further and further into the past, becoming nothing. All the

JASON JACKSON

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Amnesia (Major) – When Jason falls under the Piper's control again, this is replaced with **Enslaved**

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

kidnapped children vanish from this dimension to reappear back in the 20th Century.

Sapphire leaves the metronome behind, still ticking backwards to send the Piper even further into the past. She and Steel depart, knowing that nobody in the world will ever remember or understand what they've done.

TRIGGERS

In the Middle Ages, the sundial in the mountains above Hamelin was the Pied Piper's way into our world. But Sapphire and Steel smashed it, banishing him. They thought they'd sent the Piper back to the corridor of Time. But he had just jumped forward to the 20th Century to collect the children after they had been scattered in time by his defeat.

The book of poems containing one retelling of the legend of the Pied Piper may also be a trigger of sorts. The precise poem isn't identified, but as Jason was studying it for school, it's most likely to have been Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.

IRREGULARITIES

The Pied Piper is an agent of Time and presumably one of the creatures that move up and down the corridor of Time, trying to break out into our reality. His power lies in music, whether through singing, whistling or, more usually, playing his flute. He can control the minds of children and can travel to other times and places and through other dimensions.

The Piper is usually dressed in the motley style of a Medieval jester, but he can change his appearance. In the 20th Century, he posed as Evil Eric (a punk rocker styled after Johnny Rotten) and several other singers. It's not clear whether these personae are the Piper's original creations or whether he has done away with real people and replaced them.

At one point, the Piper's face changes to a skull when he's thinking about the destruction of the entire human race, as though he's also an avatar of death.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire and Steel have defeated the Pied Piper before, in Hamelin in the Middle Ages. So they're already aware of him as a foe.

They both travel in time again in this story, back to the Middle Ages and then returning to the 20th Century (see previous stories for notes and comments on this). They gain Medieval clothing while in Hamelin.

Sapphire is unable to get a fix on the children taken by the Piper. Presumably his dimension is too remote for her powers. It's only when she scans Jason's book of poetry that she can locate and follow him.

At the climax of the story, Sapphire uses her powers to reverse time for the metronome.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

After the fantasy exploits of the previous story, we're back in more familiar *Sapphire & Steel* territory, albeit with the Pied Piper, a mythical figure. It's a creature of Time, so it may have

taken the form of a figure out of local legend when it first appeared, or perhaps the legend was based on it afterwards.

In the brief prologue of the Pied Piper's original defeat, when Sapphire and Steel smash the sundial, the Piper seems to merge with it, and there's a lovely panel depicting the Piper shattering like stone. This could be described in game-play to illustrate the bizarre, other-worldly nature of the Piper.

The Pied Piper is a nicely weird and threatening figure, very much in the vein of the Shape from *Assignment IV*. Instead of photographs, the Piper uses music to affect the world. Having a foe that Sapphire and Steel have met before is also refreshing. In fact, their initial defeat of the Piper could be used as a prologue to this assignment, either read by the GM or played through.

Time having changed the past is also a great way to keep players on their toes.

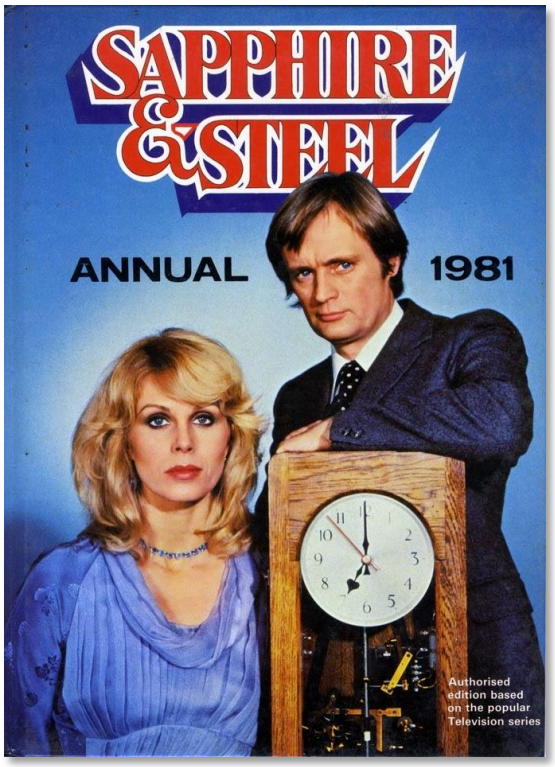
NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

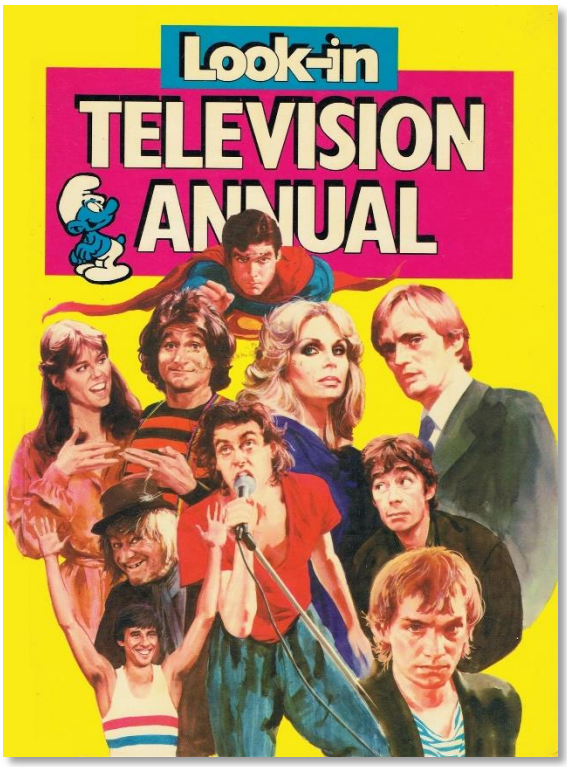
- **The Pied Piper:** A trickster figure who uses his music to control and kidnap children for Time, his master.
- **Jason Jackson:** Originally from Hamelin in the Middle Ages. Propelled into the 20th Century when the Piper was defeated the first time, and cannot remember his true past. Lives with a foster family.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The Pied Piper's powers being derived from music could be taken one step further. What if he were able to inhabit music, in much the same way as the Shape inhabits photographs? He could move into and out of any music being played anywhere at all; he could imprison people in music and perhaps even kill them with discordant notes or arrhythmic sounds. An assignment requiring the assistance of Ruby and her specialist skills perhaps?

TEXT STORIES





Apart from the novelisation of *Assignment I* by P.J. Hammond (under the unimaginative title *Sapphire and Steel* but offering some interesting insights into the TV story), there's very little official prose fiction for *Sapphire & Steel*. In fact, there are only a handful of short stories: five from the sole *Sapphire & Steel* annual and a sixth from one of the *Look-In* annuals. The former annual also contains articles about and photographs from the TV series, along with more general pieces on subjects such as telepathy and the Bermuda Triangle. In addition to the *Sapphire & Steel* text story, the *Look-In* annual includes a mix of articles, comic-strips and stories based on other properties.

Some of the stories from the *Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981* are closer in tone to the TV series but all are very brief, while the sole entry from the *Look-In* annual, *The Albatross*, follows the style of the comic-strips. In fact, *The Albatross* could easily be a "lost" script for a comic-strip, with a child as the main protagonist who is taken back into history, and Sapphire and Steel being able to travel in time to rescue him. As with the comics, P.J. Hammond read the stories in advance of publication and was aware of differences to the TV continuity. But as the annuals were aimed a younger audience, this didn't worry him.

In both annuals, the stories are accompanied by a number of illustrations. In the *Sapphire & Steel Annual*, some are in colour and others in monochrome (some tinted), while those illustrating *The Albatross* are in black-and-white.

PUBLICATION

Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981

SYNOPSIS

Rehearsals at Seahaven's brand new theatre come to a halt when two of the leading actors, Andy and Nixon, go missing. While stage manager Hugh Taverne searches the front of house, his deputy Maggie James heads down to the basement which actors often use to learn their lines. There, she encounters Sapphire and Steel, who say they are here to help get the missing pair back.

Steel explains to Maggie about the corridor of Time and that cracks sometimes appear in it and can pull things in. If left unsealed, the cracks continue to grow. Maggie doesn't believe him, but Steel angrily insists that Andy and Nixon have been dragged into another dimension and are in deadly danger, and that this entire place may similarly vanish.

Maggie tells the elementals that they're rehearsing Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* at the moment. They speculate that the play could be part of the trigger, but it wouldn't be enough on its own, merely increasing the power of the actual trigger, which is likely to be something old and connected to the play. Maggie explains that there are lots of old things stored down here, so the three of them split up to search the basement rooms methodically.

Maggie finds an old, dusty trunk labelled as the property of the Grand Theatre, Seahaven. Inside are a pile of old manuscripts and several bottles wrapped in newspaper. Examining one of the manuscripts, Maggie realises it's *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus*. Against her will, she begins to read one of the passages. As she does, she hears the voices of the missing actors joining her with their lines and encouraging her to continue. Maggie finds herself in a different room in a different theatre. Andy and Nixon (or entities resembling them) are there and tell her that they are in the Grand Theatre and the year is somewhere around 1880.

Outside the door of the room that Maggie was searching, Steel tells Sapphire to take time back two minutes so they can rescue Maggie. But their enemy is too strong and Sapphire can't hold it back. They see Maggie sucked into the trunk, and Steel slams the door closed again.

The stage manager Hugh Taverne appears, looking for Maggie. He tells the elementals that the trunk is from the old Grand Theatre, which was built a hundred years back but was closed

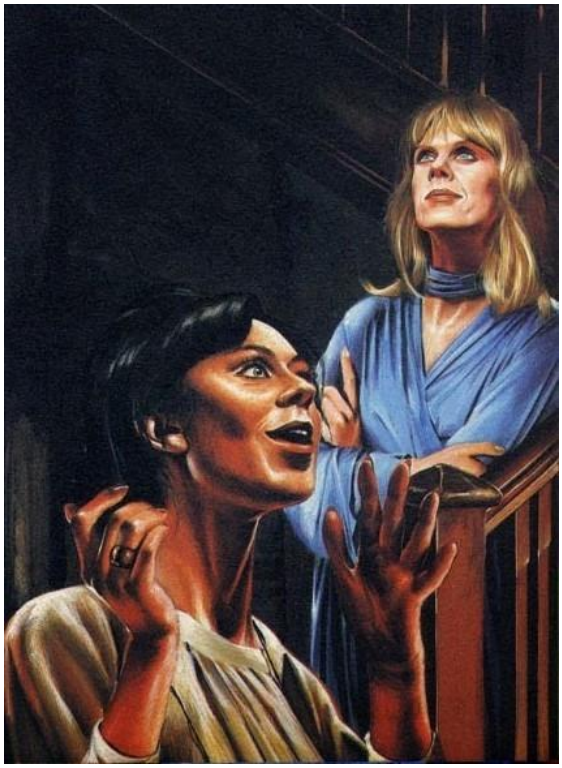
MAGGIE JAMES

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Craft (Stagecraft) 3, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 1, Technology 2, Transport 1

TRAITS
Brave
Reliable

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4



for more than a decade before being torn down a couple of years ago when work started on the construction of the new theatre. The trunk was saved, along with other bits and pieces, and stored here. Hugh recognises the lines Maggie was speaking as coming from *Dr Faustus*, the play they are opening with, which was also the play the old Grand Theatre opened with. The manuscripts and bottles are scripts and props from the earlier production.

Steel believes that Time has temporarily withdrawn from the room behind the door, which is their opportunity to destroy the trigger. He opens the door again and enters. In the trunk, the manuscript is glowing, and he hears Maggie's voice speaking to him from the past. She's on the stage of the old theatre, which is set up for its performance of *Dr Faustus*. Among the set dressing are the bottles from the trunk, one of which is glowing. Maggie describes it to Steel so that he can identify it. The glowing in the trunk intensifies as he thrusts his hand in to grab the bottle Maggie has described and throws it against the wall. As he does, Sapphire takes time back to before Andy and Nixon disappeared.

Afterwards, Steel identifies the bottle as having come from 1593, around the same date as *Dr Faustus* was written. Hugh, Maggie and the two actors head back up to the stage to restart the rehearsals, none of them remembering what has just happened.

HUGH TAVERNE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Craft (Stagecraft) 3, Knowledge 1, Technology 2, Transport 2

TRAITS
Reliable

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

TRIGGERS

Steel quickly realises that the play *Dr Faustus* isn't enough to act as a trigger in its own right, but reciting lines from it intensifies the power of the true trigger. The play's link to the old Grand Theatre in 1880 also presumably helps.

The trigger is actually one of the bottles in the old trunk. Most of them are Victorian, but one is marked '*T. Taylor, Apothecary, Seahaven, 1593*' and is therefore contemporary with the writing of the play.

IRREGULARITIES

Time itself is the irregularity here (and is described by Steel in very similar terms as in *Assignment I*). As with *Assignment I*, it spirits people away and doesn't have much of a presence other than as a glow. Use Time's stats from *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!*

The versions of Andy and Nixon that Maggie encounters in 1880 may be scions of Time rather than the real people.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire tries to take time back by a couple of minutes, but their enemy resists and she can't hold it back for long enough until Steel smashes the bottle that forms the trigger.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

Although the story is about Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, its title (spoken by Sapphire at the end of the story) comes from Act 3 of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, when Salisbury laments that if it were a day earlier, he could have provided King Richard with twelve thousand fighting men: '*O, call back yesterday, bid time return*.' It's a stretch, but could this mixing of Marlowe and Shakespeare be an allusion to the fringe theory that some of the plays attributed to Shakespeare were actually written by Kit Marlowe?

As with most short stories from British annuals of the period, *Bid Time Return* is relatively brief, but it could easily be expanded upon. A simple way would be to use the theatre as an alternative setting for an adventure resembling *Assignment I*, with Time attempting to expand from the room in the basement to take control of the building.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Maggie James:** The deputy stage manager. Calm and sensible.
- **Hugh Taverne:** The stage manager. A practical man who decides to believe what Sapphire and Steel tell him.
- **Andy and Nixon:** The leading actors, playing the roles of Faustus and Mephistopheles.
- **Bill Richards:** The play's director, who only makes a brief appearance in the story. Seems prone to angry outbursts.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- *Dr Faustus* is very apt for *Sapphire & Steel*, in which Time often makes bargains with humans. Could Kit Marlowe have made such a bargain, and if so, did it lead to his early death?

ROGUE ROBOT

PUBLICATION

Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981

SYNOPSIS

An X45 robot from the isolated laboratories of Clark-Carlton (Robotics) Limited is sent on a routine test, a walk along a country lane. But instead of turning around and returning, the robot continues to move towards the nearest market town. Alerted by a technician monitoring the X45, executive officer Henry Dickson and chief test engineer Samuels head off in a jeep to retrieve it.

Dickson confides in Samuels that the X45 is much too valuable to lose (it's worth something like £40,000!) and much too dangerous. Unlike other X-series robots, this one came ready-built from the London labs and is unique. Swearing Samuels to secrecy, Dickson tells him that it's armed with a laser gun. Although the X-series robots were designed only for industrial use, the president of a Latin American country has ordered a version for use in warfare.

Dickson and Samuels soon catch up with the X45, which in the middle of a field using its laser to disintegrate a herd of cows. It must be acting on its own volition as its destruction programme hasn't been activated. Sapphire and Steel appear beside the jeep as if from nowhere. They have been assigned to prevent the X45 from wiping out the entire population of Britain, which would be too great a disturbance to history.

Dickson tells the elementals that the robot's laser can cut through anything. But if this had happened a year from now, Clark-Carlton would have developed something they are already working on: a deflector screen capable of bouncing the laser beam right back at the robot. This field is to be the screen's test site.

X45

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**7**

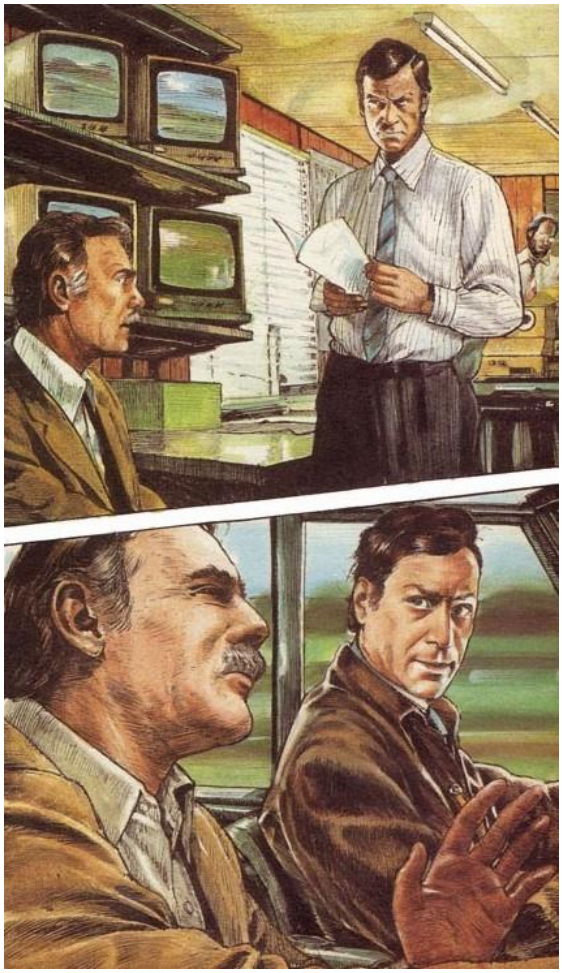
SKILLS
Fighting 2, Marksman 4

TRAITS
Armour (5 points)
By the Program (currently compromised in the X45)
Natural Weapon (Major) – Inbuilt Laser Gun: L(4/L/L) damage, Armour Piercing (ignores first 10 points of Armour or similar)
Robot
Scan

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Sapphire and Steel come up with a plan. While Steel acts as a decoy to draw the X45's fire, Sapphire takes time forward by a year. She can only mange this for a few seconds, but enough time for the deflector screen to appear behind Steel. She then takes time back by one second for Steel so he's no longer standing in front of the screen when the X45 fires at him. The laser beam is deflected and reduces the robot to scraps of metal scattered around the field.

Initially, Steel is nowhere to be seen, and



Sapphire fears the worst. But he's found lying unconscious by the jeep. Sapphire threw him back in time with such force that he banged his head and knocked himself out!

DEFLECTOR SCREEN (Major Gadget)

Traits: Reflective (Major), Bulky (Major)
Story Points: 2

TRIGGERS

This is an odd story for *Sapphire & Steel* in that there doesn't seem to be any interference with time, and there's no clear trigger that kicks off the problem. We are told that the X45 robot will wipe out the entire country if left to its own devices, and that this will cause disruption to future history. So if the undisrupted timeline is the one in which this doesn't happen, has something been meddling with time to try to ensure that it does? In which case, the robot itself could be the trigger, or perhaps more specifically, the fault which causes it to go rogue. This could have allowed Time in.

IRREGULARITIES

The X45 is the threat in this story but it's not really an irregularity. Is it possible that the design of the robot is actually from the future, and something – Time itself - has brought it back for Clark-Carlton to manufacture?

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire is able to take time forward by a year (more than on TV), though she's only able to maintain this for a few seconds. She could be spending Story points to achieve this.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

Sapphire and Steel are involved in a more traditional science fiction yarn for once, but it's too generic to fit neatly into their sub-genre.

Another annual story which is extremely brief, being little more than a single scene for PC elementals to interact with. A longer story could be generated with the robot's malfunction being caused by Time's interference and a plan to disrupt the future.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **X45 Robot:** An experimental robot. it's surprisingly fast and presumably mute.
- **Henry Dickson:** Executive officer at Clark-Carlton.
- **Samuels:** Chief test engineer at Clark-Carlton; a technician.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- We know so little about Clark-Carlton (Robotics) Ltd and their creation of the X45 that it offers possibilities for future investigations. Is the company controlled by Time or a victim of its machinations? What else is it developing that could be a threat?

CHAMBER OF HORRORS

PUBLICATION

Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981

SYNOPSIS

In the cellar of a church, six students are taking part in a sponsored sit-in for rag week, which this year coincides with the town carnival. A travelling waxworks exhibit has been hired and the dummies set up in the church, with the cellar being reserved for the 'Chamber of Horrors'. The students are being sponsored for how long they remain there.

By the time midnight approaches, the early pranks – rattling of chains and ghastly screams – have tailed off, and the students are ready to get some sleep. In fact, they are all feeling drowsy and weak, as if being drained. As midnight passes, they have all fallen into a deep, deep slumber.

A little later, the students are woken by Sapphire and Steel, and find that the waxworks have come to a semblance of life. They are swaying menacingly, leering at the students and whispering to one other. The students' leader, Andrew, tries to leave, but Steel stops him. Sapphire explains that there is evil here, and that she and Steel need the students' help in eliminating it. The waxworks have fed off their life energy, but Sapphire and Steel woke the students before they were totally drained.

The waxworks' compelling drive is that of destruction. They would have destroyed the students but, having been prevented from that, they must now destroy something else. Sapphire explains that they must be made to destroy themselves.

The waxworks are vulnerable to fire and heat, which can melt them. While the students lie back on their mattresses and let their drowsiness overcome them, Steel holds out a small mirror that one of the girls had. Sapphire's eyes glow and an intense light is reflected by the mirror towards the waxworks' podium. The elementals use the mirror and some lighted

ANIMATED WAXWORK

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**5**

SKILLS
Fighting 2

TRAITS
Alien
Dependency (Major) – Energy from a human (sleeping is best) to become active, which requires an hourly contest of Presence + Resolve, each success draining 2(1/2/3) Attribute points
Fear Factor 1
Immunity – Bullets and similar attacks
Obsession (Major) – Compelled to destroy something, anything, even each other!
Tough
Weakness (Major) – Heat and fire can melt them, while strong light drives them back

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 1-2

candles to keep the waxworks away from the sleeping students, until they are compelled to attack each other.

As dawn breaks, the students wake to find Sapphire, Steel and the waxworks gone. Did it really happen or was it all just a dream?

TRIGGERS

There doesn't appear to be a trigger for the events of this story, at least not one that is revealed to the reader. Possibly the waxworks have a link to the real people they depict, in terms of a genuine item of clothing or artefact from their era, or it's something in the cellar.

IRREGULARITIES

The waxworks are the irregularities, but the force that inhabits them is unclear. Perhaps it's Time again or one of its agents.

The waxworks seem to be very basic creatures, and their whispered speech to each other is described as primitive. They can drain the energy of the students while they sleep, giving themselves life, but they have a compulsion to destroy. Their primary targets are the people whose energy they have fed on. If denied those, they will destroy anything that is available, even each other.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

When Andrew tries to leave, Steel stops him with an arm that feels like iron.

Sapphire makes her eyes glow, usually just a side effect of her other powers, and the reflected light is sufficient to keep the waxworks at bay.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is another very brief story, again little more than an extended scene, which will need a lot of fleshing out in order to make it an interesting scenario for a game.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Andrew, Neville, Chris, Rick, Linda and Ann:** The six students, all of them level-headed and intelligent.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The unclear nature of the waxworks and the vagueness of what they might be make them ideal for a rematch. They're superficially reminiscent of Autons, so could they be controlled by the Nestene Consciousness in a *Sapphire & Steel/Doctor Who* cross-over?

STAR GAZING

PUBLICATION

Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981

SYNOPSIS

When the director of an observatory in Northumberland mysteriously vanishes, Sapphire and Steel arrive to help his assistant, Dr Smalley, get him back. They tell Dr Smalley to send all the other staff home. He does so, apart from a security guard named Simpson, whom he instructs to remain on site.

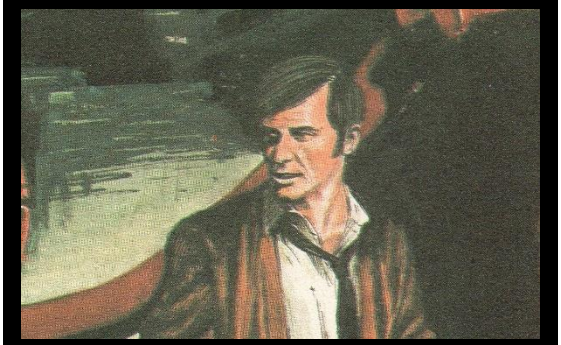
When the others have gone, the elementals explain to Dr Smalley about the corridor of Time, and that his boss Professor Bateman has been snatched away by something that has broken through a tear in the corridor. First, Sapphire and Steel try to sense where the tear is, and then ask Smalley to tell them about the observatory and its history.

Smalley informs them that the observatory was built ten years ago and is state-of-the-art, second only to Jodrell Bank in the UK, if not the world. Sapphire senses that there's something much further back than the observatory. She casts her mind back and sees Roman soldiers. Smalley tells her that there was once a Roman milehouse nearby.

The three head outside and locate the precise site of the milehouse, which is now just a few surviving stones. But as they approach, the milehouse appears intact again, complete with Roman soldiers. Steel believes that it's the trigger, but Sapphire only confirms it's a link to what has happened here. But there's something more distant.

Steel attempts to enter the milehouse to check for an entry point, only to be flung back by the tremendous force of some kind of bio-energy forcefield. Unharmed, Steel tells Sapphire to determine how and when the milestone was destroyed. She reports that in 367 AD an army of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Picts and Scots combined to drive the Romans out. The milehouse fell on September 14th at dusk. Today is also September 14th, and dusk is two hours away at most. Sapphire explains to Smalley that the vibrations are stronger today because the battle is imminent. Sometimes the energy of great events is stored forever in the places they occur. Their enemies are using that energy, but it will dissipate again after today. The three settle down to wait.

DR ERNEST SMALLEY



AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 2, Science 3 (AoE: Astronomy), Technology 3, Transport 1

TRAITS
By the Book

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

When dusk has fallen, the three witness the arrival of a large Pictish army which quickly overwhelms the Romans and begins to tear the milehouse down, stone by stone. Then, they attack a section of wall below the

observatory's parabolic reflector, which crashes down as its supports buckle. After this, the Picts move on.

The three head back inside. Although Sapphire expects to find that Professor Bateman has returned, his office is still empty. There must be something else, something even further back. Steel asks Dr Smalley if anything strange has happened recently, and he mentions the print-outs of signals the observatory has been receiving, which even he doesn't understand. When Steel examines them, he realises that they're mathematical formulae which can be decoded as messages from the distant star Zinon-4 in the galaxy of Elysia. Sapphire realises that these are the real trigger: although the messages appear to be in the present, they represent broadcasts sent in the distant past because of the intergalactic distance they have travelled.

Steel tells Smalley that the print-outs must not be decoded and demands an electro-magnet to destroy the computer tapes the messages are recorded on. Although he initially refuses to do this, Smalley calls Simpson and tells him to bring one. While Sapphire collects the print-outs for incineration, Steel uses the electro-magnet on the tapes.

The force they are up against puts up some resistance, with gusts of wind that threaten to blow them off their feet, lights flickering on and off, and the final reel of tape moving seemingly of its own accord. But at last the work is done, and as the final tape is erased, the voice of Professor Bateman summons Smalley to his office. Outside, the parabolic reflector is standing intact, restored by Sapphire as a final gift to Smalley. Sapphire and Steel vanish, and Dr Smalley will never understand what has happened here!

TRIGGERS

The Roman milehouse and its destruction on the evening of September 14th 367 AD provides energy for the evil force to use. But the real trigger is in the form of the coded messages being broadcast from Zinon-4 and the time difference between when they were sent and when they are received.

IRREGULARITIES

Time again seems to be the enemy, and the corridor of Time is again described in similar terms as in *Assignment I*. However, the Time entity doesn't make a direct appearance, instead relying on the astronomers to decode the messages they are receiving from Zinon-4. Quite who sent those messages remains unknown. They could represent an additional irregularity, though one based in the distant past and on an alien world.

SIMPSON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Fighting 3, Marksman 2, Transport 2

TRAITS
Tough

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

A punch from the security guard Simpson has no effect on Steel, and it feels as if he has hit a

wall made of cast iron. Steel is also immune to the bitter cold outside the observatory and is unharmed when thrown back by the forcefield (which is presumably generated by Time to protect the Roman milehouse).

Sapphire uses her elemental senses to gather information on the destruction of the Roman milehouse, and later to determine the location of an electro-magnet. She also restores the observatory's parabolic reflector, presumably by rolling time back to before it was damaged (though this isn't explained).

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

At nine pages, this is the longest of the stories from the annuals. It was written by the same writer as *Bid Time Return* and is similarly close in feel to the TV episodes. Consequently, there's more depth to this story than to some of the others, especially with the Roman milehouse being, well not exactly a red herring, but secondary to Time's plans. Ghostly Roman soldiers are a common theme in British hauntings and more could be made of these in the assignment.

What do the messages received from Zinon-4 say? Steel is adamant that they must not be decoded and all record of them must be destroyed. If the mathematical formulae are converted into intelligible language, will they open a way for Time to break through in force?

The idea of the time difference between the broadcast and receipt of a message over intergalactic distances providing a weakness for Time to break through is a neat one. It might be re-used in different ways. Perhaps merely observing a distant star would be enough in certain circumstances, the version of the star we see in the present having actually existed perhaps thousands of years ago.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Dr Ernest Smalley:** Assistant director of the observatory. A scientist and a rational man.
- **Simpson:** Security guard. Not above using violence against intruders!
- **Professor Bateman:** Director of the observatory; missing for most of the story.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- What is the significance of Zinon-4? Could this star be a stronghold of Time and its presence be important in future assignments?

FINGER OF BLOOD

PUBLICATION

Sapphire & Steel Annual 1981

SYNOPSIS

Sapphire and Steel arrive in a plaza outside the headquarters of a State Governor on the day of the assassination of US President Hennessy. Except that it is quiet, as though the assassination hasn't occurred. Steel speculates that there has been a diversion in the chain of events. Sapphire spots a patch of fresh blood by the building's entrance, merely a fingerful at one of the spots where the assassination could have taken place.

A military policeman tells them to move on and draws a gun when they continue to ask him whether the President is OK and if an attempt on his life has taken pace. Steel gets Sapphire to take time back by five minutes, but when she does, the elementals have moved in space as well as time and find themselves in an office overlooking the plaza. The sky outside is now bright blue, whereas before it had been darkening. But the plaza is still quiet.

Steel theorises that what has happened isn't a simple break in time, but massive disruption with two or more different possibilities trying to exist: a sunny day and a grey one; the assassination both has and hasn't taken place. But it's just a theory.

The man whose office they are in enters and introduces himself as Mr Makepeace, a presidential aide. He assumes they have an appointment with him. When they ask about any assassination attempt on the President, Makepeace assures them that the would-be assassin was arrested last Friday and that no attempt has been made today.

The elementals lead Makepeace outside and show him the blood stain, which is now visibly growing. There is a second blood stain further down the entrance steps, also growing, and another out on the plaza, the latter belonging to the assassin himself. Including the timeline in which there is no attempted assassination, there are now four competing versions of events.

While Makepeace disappears back inside to inform the President, Sapphire and Steel reason that the existence of a version of events in which the assassination wasn't even attempted means that the time fracture occurred sometime before, when the assassin

PRESIDENT HENNESSY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 2, Technology 1, Transport2

TRAITS
Authority (Major)
Charming
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

MAKEPEACE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Knowledge 3, Technology 2, Transport 2

TRAITS
Authority (Minor)
Face in the Crowd

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

was prevented from getting to the plaza. They need to go back in time to find out what that was. But Makepeace appears again and tells them to come and talk to the President.

While Steel explains to an incredulous President Hennessy what they believe is happening, the multiple timelines try to impose themselves: an empty fireplace suddenly bursts into flames then dies out; the sky outside switches from blue to grey and back again. The elementals manage to persuade a reluctant Hennessy to come outside and retrace his steps from when he approached and entered the building earlier.

Surrounded by aides and bodyguards, the President crosses the plaza and walks up the entrance steps. As he does, Sapphire and Steel hear a crowd of people and gunshots at the points when he could have been assassinated. Except Hennessy carries on as if nothing has happened. Sapphire is overcome with a vision of a pebble being thrown up from a road and smashing the windscreen of the assassin's car, forcing him to turn back. At the plaza, the multiple timelines continue to assert themselves, becoming more and more chaotic.

Sapphire realises that the pebble is the source of the fracture in time. Arriving at the roadside, Steel picks it up before the assassin's car approaches, allowing it to continue on unscathed towards the plaza.

On a secluded beach, Sapphire and Steel discuss the pebble. Without it breaking the windscreen, the assassin was able to carry on and kill President Hennessy in each of the other three timelines. In all of those three, the assassin was killed after shooting the President. But the death of Hennessy in the plaza that day was required to avoid him declaring nuclear war in two years and thirty-four days' time, culminating in the total destruction of the Earth.

TRIGGERS

The pebble is at the heart of the mystery and is the trigger around which the disastrous timeline resulting in the destruction of the Earth could come into being.

IRREGULARITIES

Although it's not made clear, Time is presumably the enemy in this story. It takes no active role in events though, with the possible exception of ensuring the pebble in placed in the road in the first place.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire takes time back by five minutes to avoid the confrontation with the military policeman, and later by a greater amount to allow Steel to remove the pebble from the road.

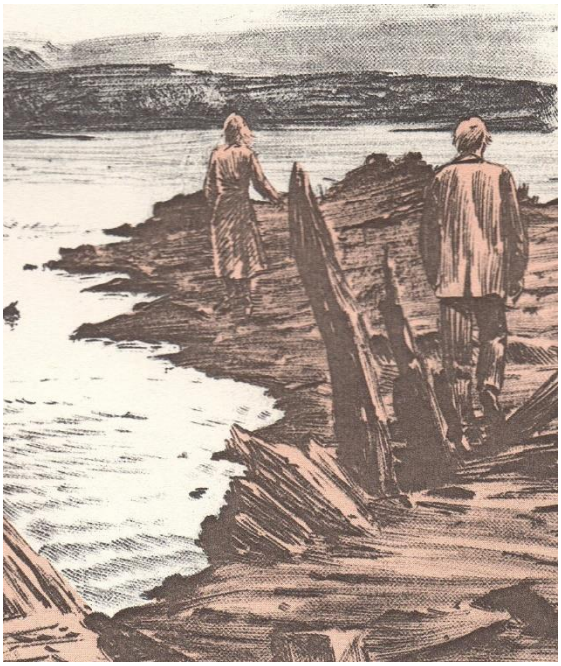
Both Sapphire and Steel can see the overlapping and competing timelines, even though the humans are unaware of them (with the exception of the blood stains).

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The basis of this story is very similar to *Assignment V*, in that somebody has to die otherwise the world will be destroyed. The major difference here is that resolving the conflicting timelines is achieved by the relatively passive means of picking up a pebble, rather than convincing somebody to shoot the person they love. It's also worth noting that it doesn't matter which of the three timelines in which the President is killed survives, just so long as he dies.

This story has an intriguing concept and, in line with the TV series, it presents a series of mysteries for the players to resolve, including identifying the trigger item. The visible effects of the temporal chaos – changes in weather and other details – are a useful means to put pressure on the players and are also a way to add additional complications or threats.

Although not particularly emphasised in the text of the story, this is one of Sapphire and Steel's rare ventures beyond British shores, which can give a game based on it a slightly different tone.



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **President Hennessy:** US President. Less willing to believe Sapphire and Steel than Makepeace is, but prepared to listen to the advice of his aide.
- **Mr Makepeace:** Presidential aide. A practical man, but one willing to believe the fantastical evidence he is shown.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The assassination of President Hennessy brings to mind that of JFK in 1963 (in particular, the common setting of a plaza). An assignment based around such a pivotal real-world event being negated would add extra interest.

THE ALBATROSS

PUBLICATION

Look-In Television Annual (cover undated but copyright 1981)

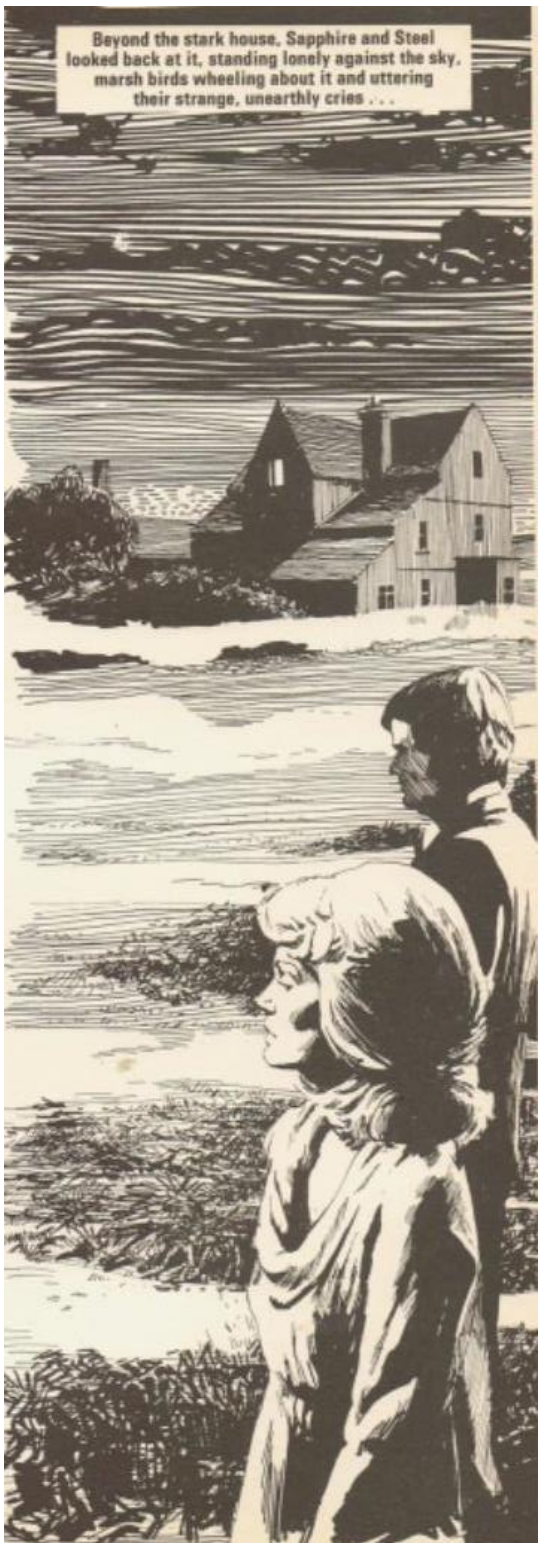
SYNOPSIS

Lying in the middle of an eerie saltmarsh, the old house of Gaunt Gables is reputed to be haunted. Its newest occupants are eminent biologist John Carter, his wife Anne, a writer, and their twelve-year-old son, Adam. Exploring the house's attic, Adam discovers an intricately detailed model sailing ship bearing the name *The Albatross* and a silver bosun's whistle. Blowing the whistle, Adam finds himself transported to a raft adrift in the open sea, with the real *Albatross* looming over him!

Back at Gaunt Gables, John and Anne's day is interrupted by the arrival of Sapphire and Steel, who warn them that Adam is in danger. Sapphire and Steel tell them about the evil force of Time and of the bosun's whistle which has allowed Time to smash through and carry Adam off to another era.

Heading up to the attic, Sapphire uses her powers to sense the model ship which was here but has vanished. All four go to the Royal Naval Museum at Greenwich to trace the original *Albatross* and learn that she was sunk three miles off Romney on October 14th, 1790 during an encounter with a privateer, *La Reine*. October 14th is the following day, and Sapphire realises that Time has taken Adam in order to turn the tide of the battle. If history is changed, chaos will ensue!

On board *The Albatross*, the crew promise to return Adam to shore after they've caught the privateer they're hunting for. A seagull possessed by Time spies on them. It intends that Adam will save the life of a French spy aboard *The Albatross* who has the plans of all of Britain's coastal defences. These will allow


Beyond the stark house, Sapphire and Steel looked back at it, standing lonely against the sky, marsh birds wheeling about it and uttering their strange, unearthly cries . . .

France to successfully invade Britain, changing history.

La Reine is sighted and battle is joined. *The*

Albatross's secretary – in reality the French spy – knows to keep Adam close to him to survive the encounter. *La Reine* proves too nimble for the British ship and soon *The Albatross* is rudderless and floundering. The spy can't swim, but Adam has earned his lifesaving badge and can save him.

Sapphire and Steel materialise on deck to find the English sailors dead and dying. The noise and confusion of battle prevents Sapphire from concentrating enough to freeze time and allow them to rescue Adam. Instead, Steel uses a discarded musket to shoot the seagull acting as Time's eyes and ears, and the next thing Adam knows, he's back in the attic with the model of *The Albatross*.

The three humans believe they've been dreaming. Outside, Sapphire throws the bosun's whistle deep into the muddy marsh before she and Steel depart.

TRIGGERS

The bosun's whistle is the key trigger here, enabling Time to spirit whoever blows it to 1790. Sapphire says they could have used it to follow Adam, but it had disappeared with him. The role of the model ship is less certain and acts more as a clue to Adam's whereabouts. But perhaps it's a necessary link to the real ship.

The location of the house is also significant. In centuries past, it lay on the coast near to where *The Albatross* sank. But the sea has since receded and it now lies in Romney Marsh.

IRREGULARITIES

Time is again the foe in this story. It is present within the seagull that spies on *The Albatross* in 1790. Once the gull is killed, Time's influence is severed and things return to normal, including Adam returning to the house's attic.

The French spy aboard *The Albatross* is an agent of Time. Like Emma Mullrine in *Assignment V*, he has presumably entered into a deal with Time in order to change history.

ADAM CARTER

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 3 (AoE: Swimming), Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Brave
Insatiable Curiosity

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

In order to convince John and Anne about the danger to their son, Sapphire "freezes time" for them, though they are both still able to see and hear. This is similar to how she and Steel freeze people in the TV series. However, Sapphire is later unable to freeze time in the confusion of the battle aboard *The Albatross*.

This is another example of a story in which Sapphire and Steel can travel through time.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

Sapphire says that they sensed the presence of the bosun's whistle but too late to stop Adam

blowing it. This sounds slightly different from the usual briefing the elementals receive prior to an assignment (but is fairly commonplace in the later comic-strips). Perhaps they just happened to be "passing through" after their previous mission?

Quite how Steel knew that the seagull was possessed by Time is unexplained. It may be something that he or more likely Sapphire sensed, but this just speculation.

The story is brief and is resolved abruptly. There is opportunity to expand it, either at the house and surrounding marshes, or in 1790, or both. Attempts by Time to foil Sapphire and Steel's activities could be introduced to add a greater level of threat to proceedings.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Adam Carter:** Twelve years old. Brave and inquisitive. Good swimmer; has earned a lifesaving badge.
- ***The Albatross*'s Secretary:** An agent of Time and a spy for France. Devoted to his cause, but otherwise only described as having a gaunt, pale face and black, broadcloth clothing.
- **John Carter:** Adam's father, an eminent biologist in the middle of undertaking complicated research. Normally rational and not taken to flights of fantasy.
- **Anne Carter:** Adam's mother, a writer working on her latest book. As her husband, she's normally rational.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The act of blowing a whistle causing something bad to happen isn't a new idea. M.R. James's ghost story *Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad* is a famous example. Perhaps have the whistle (or similar object) summon a hostile force, as in James's tale.

THE FRENCH SPY

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

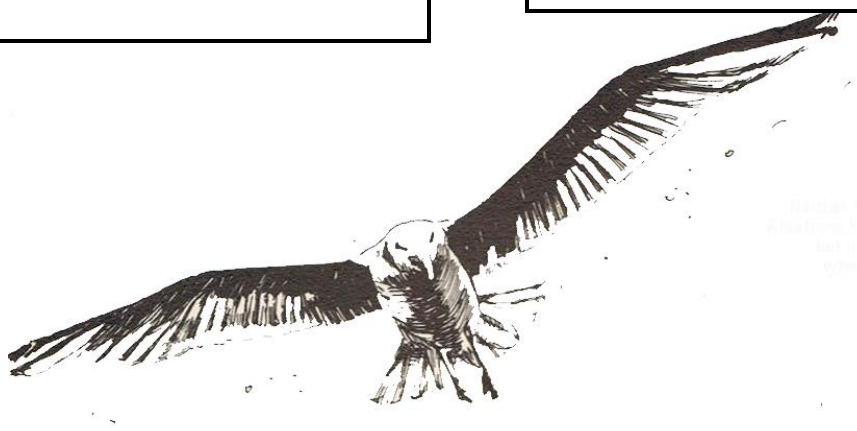
SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Fighting 2, Marksman 2, Subterfuge 4, Transport 1

TRAITS
Brave
Dark Secret (Major) – Spy for France
Obligation (Major) - Time
Obligation (Major) - France

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

SEAGULL

ATTRIBUTES: Strength 1, Coordination 4, Awareness 3
SKILLS: Athletics 2, Fighting 2, Survival 4
TRAITS: Flight (Major), Keen Senses (Minor: Vision), Size: Tiny (Major)



AUDIOS

When Big Finish secured the rights to produce audio plays of *Sapphire & Steel*, they'd hoped that the original main cast members would return. However, David McCallum was too busy working in America on NCIS, and Joanna Lumley declined as she felt she had moved on from the role of Sapphire and didn't wish to revisit it. So by the time Big Finish announced the series, still a year away from the first release, they had recast both parts, with Susannah Harker becoming Sapphire and David Warner as Steel. The only original cast member to return was David Collings, who reprised the role of Silver in three of the audios. P.J. Hammond was also invited to contribute to the series but declined as he felt his writing style to be more suited to a visual medium.

Another thing that changed over time was that Big Finish originally envisaged their stories as being set before the televised ones. However, as the series progressed, it became clear that they take place at some point after *Assignment VI*, and the war with the transient beings which was hinted at in the final TV story forms a background to the audios.

With its new main cast, the audios could be considered to be a reboot rather than a continuation of the TV series. But whichever way they're viewed, they still offer some excellent ideas for roleplaying scenarios. Major differences in characterisation or continuity are noted against individual stories.

THE PASSENGER

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in May 2005; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series One* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

In 2004, Philip Burgess has been waiting for the 21.30 train for over an hour. He speaks to the only member of staff at the station, but they remain silent. When a steam train pulls in, he gets on it.

Sapphire and Steel arrive on board the train. Sapphire tells Steel there's only one passenger on the train, Philip Burgess. Steel thought he heard a girl, but there's nobody else, not even a driver. She says the train was assembled between 1932 and 1934. In this carriage it's 1938, in another 2004, another 1932. But most are in 2004. Outside it's no year, no time, nothing. She doesn't think it's a trap, as time is moving inside the carriages and the train seems to be going somewhere.

The elementals enter Burgess's first-class carriage to talk to him. He can't remember where he's travelling from or to, or even which line it is. He says he's just been to an antiquarian book collector's fair and is on his way home. He's seen the train conductor, though Sapphire and Steel haven't. Among his purchases at the book fair, Burgess has a murder mystery set on a train, an original edition. It could be the trigger, but there are other things which could also be.

Steel goes to find the conductor while Sapphire stays with Burgess. They can't see anything outside other than a thick mist and the darkness.

Steel hears a girl giggling and then reciting a rhyme about a train. She appears in front of Steel and asks if he's seen her daddy. She says

she's special, she's a princess! When Steel tries to touch her, she crumples into paper.

Burgess says there's nobody else on the train, apart from a girl he saw running and singing a while ago. The train stopped just the once, which is presumably where she got on, but he couldn't see where it was.

Sapphire joins Steel, who tells her about the girl. He shows her the crumpled paper, which had the girl's photo on it but is now blank. Steel asks Sapphire to takes time back to try to find the girl again. But Sapphire has difficulty as Time resists; the girl is like paper slipping through her fingers. They briefly hear her and see her face but Sapphire can't keep her here. Sapphire sees that her skull is fractured and recognises a hopeless look in her face, as if she's seen her end. She's been taken out of time. Sapphire senses that the girl's from the early '80s, and that it's 1982 in this carriage.

Steel finds four more people in another carriage who got on at the last stop: an elderly couple, a middle aged woman with her hair in a bun and a young man. The middle aged woman, Mrs Warburton, is a nursemaid for "His Lordship" but has left her position. She's from 1919.

Sapphire returns to Burgess, who is sleeping. The girl – "the princess" - appears and again says she can't find her daddy. Sapphire gets the girl to say her rhyme and senses that the girl is the ghost of somebody who died in 1982.

Steel determines that the elderly couple, Lord and Lady Rothmore, are from 1963, and the young man, John Andrews, is from 1943. Andrews becomes agitated and draws a gun. He just wants to get off when they cross the border. Steel realises that they're all ghosts.

Burgess wakes and tells Sapphire that the conductor came and checked his ticket. He thinks he recognises him from a recruitment poster for the railways, but that was sixty years ago. He was also on the platform when Burgess boarded.

Andrews shoots Mrs Warburton, but she's unharmed apart from feeling "tingly" in her chest. Still upset, Andrews says he's a flight sergeant attached to 106 Squadron Bomber Command. Another elemental, Gold, appears and makes a bullet stick in the gun chamber, causing the gun to explode in Andrews' hand.

Gold goes to speak with Sapphire. He says he was summoned, not sent, and hasn't been fully briefed. Steel is angry at his interference, but it was Steel who summoned Gold.

It's 1919 in the carriage now. Steel wants Sapphire to read the other passengers. Gold suggests trying to stop the train and goes to check the driver's cab.

Mrs Warburton has been treating Andrews' injured hand. Sapphire enters their carriage and talks to them both. Andrews' last memory is as part of a bombing crew. He was manning the rear gun, but he couldn't get a bead on the enemy when they came out of nowhere. He saw the face of the enemy pilot laughing as he squeezed the trigger. Then he remembers seeing the bodies of his comrades in the wreckage and walking for a long time. Eventually, he came to a train station.

Steel goes back to find the princess but Burgess says she's gone again. Burgess had been dreaming about her but before he'd even seen her. He must have seen her somewhere else. In the dream, he was driving a car, rushing to get somewhere, and hit the girl. There was no impact, just shreds of paper everywhere. It's a recurring nightmare he has. Steel tells him she died in 1982 in those exact circumstances, but Burgess denies he killed her. It was just a dream. He has it every night, though the details change: he could be driving a car or a bus or a truck; sometimes the brakes fail or a tyre blows; and the victims are different. But he's had essentially the same dream every night for the past fifteen years.

In the driver's cab, Gold meets the conductor and questions him. But the conductor remains silent. Gold accuses him of conducting everything: the locomotive, the signals, the points. The conductor has chosen the direction, but Gold tells him he can adjust the controls to make them arrive early or late, and timing is everything. Gold throws a few levers to speed the train up. But it immediately starts to slow down; is this a demonstration of the conductor's control, or a scheduled stop?

Sapphire and Steel notice the train has stopped, but they can see nothing through the window. Three new passengers enter the carriage, and Mrs Warburton introduces everyone to them.

Steel explains to Burgess that there are forces perhaps stronger than life at work. Gold enters and informs Steel of the conductor and the lack of a driver. Burgess tells them the train can't run without one because of the dead man's handle. He admits he used to be a train driver. Gold suggests blowing up the train's boiler as most of the passengers are dead anyway, but Sapphire arrives and tells them that not all of them are. There's Burgess to consider.

Mrs Warburton is holding forth about her former employer and his obsession with a new car. She died by being run over while crank-starting it for him.

Sapphire tells Gold and Steel what she's learned of the latest arrivals. One, Rose who wanted to be an actress, is from 1993 and died when her boyfriend's motorcycle clipped a lamppost while she was in the sidecar. Another, Mr Hadley, was a salesman travelling to America in 1907 when his boat hit an iceberg. The third, Mark Tanner, was a valet for an upmarket hotel. He shouldn't have been working that night, but a colleague was sick. A lift cable snapped and he plunged to his death in 1994. All died in forms of transport.

Gold again suggests blowing up the train's boiler, but Steel objects. For one thing, they don't know where or when the wreckage might end up. For another, it wouldn't stop Time. Sapphire has realised that each of the passengers matches one of the characters in Burgess's murder mystery novel. Some of the links are tenuous, but they're there. Burgess is the victim, as he's the only one who's still alive: Time wants Philip Burgess dead. There are four more passengers needed, plus the two detectives. Sapphire tells Steel that in the book *all* the passengers killed the victim. She also realises that in the book, the two detectives were already on the train when the murder occurred, and a third – the coroner – arrived later, matching Sapphire, Steel and Gold. Time expected them and is playing with them.

Andrews tells Mrs Warburton that he'd volunteered rather than be drafted. It wasn't through bravery, but to choose his own assignment and join the RAF. Mrs Warburton comforts him and tells Andrews that she went into service with her employers after her husband died in the Great War. She remembers their name: Burgess!

Gold encounters the girl, who calls Burgess "*the bad man*". As he talks to her, Gold sees the scene of her death as she was hit by a car. Burgess wakes from his dream again; this time he was in an aeroplane shooting down an enemy bomber. He starts to tell Steel of a woman, Louise, aged 24, but resists remembering more.

Gold informs Sapphire of what he saw, of the princess being hit by a car driven by Burgess, of dying on a ship captained by Burgess, of being in a limousine driven by a drunk chauffeur, again Burgess. Sapphire tells him none of it was real; Burgess wasn't even born when some of these deaths occurred. She realises that Time has also been distorting the other passengers' memories to make them hate Burgess. Gold goes to confront the conductor again.

Mrs Warburton is rousing the other passengers against Burgess, whom the girl has told her is in the first-class carriage. They all believe they are dead because of him and can now get their revenge.

Burgess tells Steel of Louise, whom he saw on a train he was driving. He was distracted by her for a crucial second as his train went through a signal and was hit by another train, killing Louise. Her death doesn't tally with that of any of the passengers, so the elementals believe it's true. After the crash, Burgess was jailed. He

PHILIP BURGESS

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 3 (AoE: Books), Technology 1, Transport 3 (AoE: Trains)

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – Guilt over the death of Louise
Phobia - Claustrophobia

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 4

lost his job and hasn't even been able to drive a car since.

The train stops and the final four passengers board. Gold is again talking to the silent conductor, telling him that they know of the passengers' links to the book. Gold says he knows how to stop him, but the conductor attacks him.

Sapphire fails to convince Mrs Warburton and the others that Burgess cannot have been responsible for all their deaths. They are determined to have their revenge, something the conductor has also encouraged them to do.

Burgess's book flies out of his bag of its own accord. He picks it up and reads a scene that wasn't in the original. In it, the coroner disturbs the conductor in the act and is killed by him. As the coroner lies dying, he calls out for Sapphire and Steel. Steel telepathically contacts Sapphire, who goes to help Gold.

Burgess now believes that all this is his punishment for the death of Louise. He babbles about also being responsible for the deaths of the other passengers and that he needs to die. Sapphire arrives, takes the book and sees that the coroner dies in Chapter 5. All she has to do is turn back to Chapter 4 and he's alive again, but still trapped on the page.

The train speeds up, and Sapphire and Steel suspect the pattern has changed. Steel goes to delay the passengers while Sapphire attempts to rescue Gold from the book.

In the other passengers' carriage, Steel tears through the floor to try to decouple it. But Mrs Warburton tells him that won't work. The conductor has replaced Lord Rothmore as one of the twelve characters from the book as Rothmore won't bloody his hands. Steel blocks their way.

Sapphire makes telepathic contact with Gold, but he's too indistinct to be understood. She tells him to follow her voice to try to find the break that Time used to trap him in the book. In the book, the words rearrange themselves as Gold uses them to communicate, telling Sapphire to allow Burgess to stop the train.

In the driver's cab, Sapphire and Burgess discover that Gold has escaped from the trap. With Gold's encouragement, Burgess takes his place at the controls.

Steel admits he can't stop the passengers, only delay them. He slams another door in their faces and holds it closed. But they've already broken through several so it's only a matter of time until they reach Burgess.

In the driver's cab, Burgess is having a panic attack from his claustrophobia. Gold persuades

him to take the controls and stop the train at the next signal. But the brakes don't respond. Gold reveals that he suspected that Burgess wouldn't be able to affect the train's speed, as he'd already tried himself. Gold had only been able to speed the train up from within the book by influencing the words. He and Sapphire now try to persuade Burgess that the crash that killed Louise wasn't his fault, as there were lots of contributory factors. But the court gave its verdict and sent Burgess to prison, an easy thing to do as he blamed himself. It's his guilt that has drawn the passengers to this train.

There is only one door left for the passengers to break though. Gold comes to Steel's aid, then Burgess emerges, ready to face the consequences of his guilt. The princess is the first to doubt whether he deserves to be killed, and becomes crumpled paper again. Others follow and the conductor abandons them, as they rest are useless now. Finally, even Mrs Warburton vanishes.

After Sapphire and Steel see Burgess off the train, they're left with the book, a unique one as in this version there's no murder. It must be destroyed to prevent the contamination from spreading. Outside, it's now 1938, the same as inside.

In 2004, Philip Burgess has been waiting for the 21.30 train for over an hour. Gold appears on the platform and tells Burgess he's made alternative arrangements to get him home.

TRIGGERS

The key trigger is Philip Burgess's guilt for the death of Louise in a train crash fifteen years ago. This has allowed Time to break through in a similar manner as the Darkness, which used the soldier's resentment in *Assignment II*.

The book that Burgess purchased at the book fair is a secondary trigger, giving Time a link to twelve other people who will be prepared to kill him. Although the book's title and author are never mentioned, it's clear that it's Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Burgess corresponds to the murder victim; each of the other passengers to one of the twelve murderers; and Sapphire, Steel and Gold to the two detectives already on the train plus the coroner who arrives later in the novel.

MRS WARBURTON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Medicine 2

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – Hatred of the employer who caused her death
Immunity – As she's already dead, she will not die until Time has finished with her
Loud
Special – Ghost: Mrs Warburton is a ghost and only exists on this train; attempts to harm or interfere with her may result in her being reduced to crumpled paper only to reappear later

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

IRREGULARITIES

Time has broken through, using Philip Burgess's guilt over a death caused by his negligence while he was a train driver and his purchase of an original edition of *Murder on the Orient Express*. These two factors have

allowed Time to summon twelve people who died in accidents involving various methods of transportation, and it is manipulating them so that they will kill Burgess fourteen years and three months before his time. Even though Burgess isn't anybody important, his death will cause ripples that will change the future in hundreds of ways. Time appears in this story as the silent train conductor (see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* for Time's stats).

Time has also recreated a steam locomotive and carriages in which it can carry out its plan. Sapphire senses that it was built between 1932 and 1934, and Burgess, a steam enthusiast, identifies it as a 5700 Class locomotive of a type withdrawn from service in the 1950s. Each of the carriages are in a different, sometimes shifting time zone, anywhere from 1919 to 2004, which matches the range of times the passengers all come from.

The passengers are being manipulated by Time to believe that their deaths were all caused by Philip Burgess, even though in many cases this is impossible. They soon realise they are dead and will want to kill him out of revenge. The passengers are described as ghosts without any further explanation. Presumably they're similar to those of *Assignment II*.

Gold being trapped inside the book is very reminiscent of the Land of Fiction in *The Mind Robber*. As the Doctor was able to influence events in the Land of Fiction, so Gold is able to influence the running of the train (and perhaps its internal environment if he had tried).

8 SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND GOLD)

When they first arrive on the train, Sapphire says it's been a long time [since she last saw Steel]. There's no mention or explanation of their appearances being different to those of the TV series, but Steel sounds older. With respect to the late David Warner, his version of Steel lacks David McCallum's **Attractive** trait.

Sapphire tries to take time back to see the girl, but Time resists and she is only briefly

FLIGHT SERGEANT JOHN ANDREWS

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Fighting 2, Marksman 4, Survival 1, Transport 2

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – Haunted by the laughing face of the enemy fighter pilot who shot his plane down
Immunity – as Mrs Warburton
Military Rank (Minor)
Sense of Direction
Special – Ghost: as Mrs Warburton

EQUIPMENT: Revolver: 5(2/5/7) damage

TECH LEVEL: 4 **STORY POINTS:** 2

"THE PRINCESS"

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Convince 1

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – Trauma caused by her death in a road accident
Immunity – as Mrs Warburton
Impulsive
Special – Ghost: as Mrs Warburton

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 2

successful. She scans the train and passengers to determine what years they come from.

Steel uses his strength to tear a carriage floor up and then hold the doors shut against the passengers, though only temporarily.

This story introduces Gold, an elemental with specialist skills with vehicles. His stats were provided in *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!*, but they were written without access to the audios. Updated stats for him are provided on page 195. In this story, Gold causes a bullet to stick in the chamber of Andrews' gun, which he achieves by means of his control over friction, causing it to explode. He comes across as overly confident. Sapphire describes him as too impatient and too arrogant, and Steel thinks he's undisciplined.

At the end of the story, Sapphire and Steel don't seem concerned about ending up in 1938. Is this an indication that they can travel in time, or will they just be extracted as usual?

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The audios start off with one which very closely matches the style and pattern of the TV series. It's a supernatural tale with shifting time zones and hints of a murder mystery (though it's more a "who'll do it" than a whodunit).

Perhaps not surprisingly for an audio, it's very talky compared to the TV stories, with the main passengers gradually revealing their back stories and their hatred of Burgess, and Sapphire and Steel discussing what they've found out and the theories they come up with. Gold does relatively little of this as he prefers to take action and confront the conductor.

The girl's nursery rhyme (a variation of *Here's a Little Choo-Choo Train*, or just *Choo-Choo Train*) is a red herring playing on our expectations of the usual role of such rhymes in *Sapphire & Steel*. The GM could use it as an additional trigger if desired:

This is a choo-choo train, puffing down the track.
Now it's going forward, now it's going back.
Now the bell is ringing, now the whistle blows.
What a lot of noise it makes, everywhere it goes.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Gold:** An elemental agent with an affinity with vehicles. Stats for Gold are provided on page 195.
- **Philip Burgess:** Antiquarian bookseller and former train driver from 2004. 66 years old; has 14 years and 3 months of life left. Suffers from guilt over causing a woman's death in a train crash, and claustrophobia from his consequent time in prison.
- **Mrs Sheila Warburton:** A nursemaid who died in 1919, killed by her employer's new car. Her husband died in the Great War. Loud and very outspoken; northern accent.
- **John Andrews:** RAF crewman who died in 1943; rear gunner on a bomber that was shot down. Haunted by the face of the enemy pilot.
- **"The princess":** Six-year-old girl killed by a car in 1982.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- How about other forms of transport that will require Gold's support? We know that Sapphire, Steel and Lead already visited the *Mary Celeste*, and the later audios will include assignments set on a motor yacht (see page 145) and a space shuttle (see page 187). But how about using the legend of the Flying Dutchman as a setting, or a doomed airship such as the *Graf Zeppelin*?

DAISY CHAIN

ADVISORY WARNING

This is the first of the audios to have an advisory content warning from Big Finish, in this case in relation to the emotional impact of baby loss and suicide ideation leading to suicide.

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in June 2005; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series One* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

2004: At number 29 on a suburban street, the Sowersby family is celebrating as Jamie has been granted a place at university. Abruptly, the house is filled with chaotic noise…

Weeks later, Sapphire and Steel arrive in the street nearby. Inside the house, Gaby Sowersby is watching the TV as it glitches through channels, while her daughter Jen plays loud music in her room. A music box begins to play and Gaby begs it to stop. Then James enters, back from university for a visit, and Gaby phones to order pizzas for them all.

Sapphire and Steel reach number 29, with Steel complaining that it's all very mundane. As Sapphire says, that's suburbia. She senses something old but not ancient. It knows they're coming. She tells Steel that the houses were built in 1953. Before then, the area was farmland. She can't sense anything out of the ordinary about it. No wars were fought here, no mysterious deaths, nothing. It's not the site, just this one house and a presence within it.

Inside, James and Jen tease each other until Jen tells him to get out and the mood turns sombre. She calls her brother the "*golden boy*" and the "*number one son*". When James has left, she speaks to something else.

In his old bedroom, James talks to somebody called Josh, while downstairs his mother lays the table for one place too many before telling a presence to leave them alone. The doorbell rings and Gaby allows Sapphire and Steel to come in. Steel introduces themselves and claims that their car has broken down so they need to use the phone. Sapphire telepathically tells Steel that all three of the humans have secrets.

Somewhere in the house, Brahms' *Lullaby* is being sung in an off-key manner.

Jen goes back upstairs and puts her music on too loud again, the same song as before. Sapphire has noticed that the table has been set for four, though nobody else is expected as Gaby tells them her husband left her. Suddenly, the air is filled with the sound of the TV glitching through channels before blasting out the repeated refrain "*Get out of my head!*" Gaby tries to explain it as something wrong with the electrics, and it abruptly stops.

The elementals try to persuade Gaby to tell them what's going on, but she insists that nothing is happening here. She tells them to

leave, but the elementals refuse.

Elsewhere, Brahms' *Lullaby* is being sung again. Jen tells James that it has got worse. It has started talking to her, telling her it's going to kill her. James reassures her that everything will be fine. He leaves to fetch a jumper from his room before heading downstairs, while Jen pleads with something to be left alone.

Gaby becomes hysterical, claiming that Sapphire and Steel are social workers. Steel slaps her to calm her down, but it makes her worse. Gaby faints just as James and Jen enter the room. Sapphire says they only want to help, and James believes her.

As James and Jen make their mother comfortable, Sapphire tells Steel it's not the house but one of the humans. She says that the family is undergoing change, which may be the cause. But there's something else here. They ask James and Jen to explain what has been happening. They say that the "thing" has always been here. It's like one of the family, but they don't really talk about it. The TV glitching is new; it only started just before James went off to university. It's like it's getting stronger and has been worse since James went away. It's been talking to Jen, a voice in her head that sounds like her own. It's always been there but it's getting stronger.

James asks to speak with Steel in private, leaving Sapphire with Jen. As Jen and Sapphire talk, an old music box on the mantelpiece starts playing Brahms' *Lullaby*. Jen says that her mum used to sing it to them when they were kids. The music box isn't electric, so it suddenly starting can't be explained away like the TV glitching. Jen says the ghost probably switched it on. Sapphire uses her hypnotic powers to try to get Jen to say why it's here, but she proves too strong and breaks free of Sapphire's control.

James tells Steel that earlier he couldn't open his wardrobe door, and when he later went to fetch a jumper from his room, the room itself wasn't there. His entire bedroom has gone! Steel receives a telepathic communication from Sapphire, telling him that Jen knows what it ("he") is, though only subconsciously. In return, Steel tells her about James's room, which he and James are investigating.

Sapphire opens the music box and something possesses her. Under its control, she gasps "*Hello, Jennifer. Long time, no see!*"

James opens his bedroom door to reveal only blackness beyond. Steel says the room doesn't exist at the moment, having been replaced by Time. Something is allowing Time to break through into reality. If not stopped, it won't just be the Sowersbys who suffer. Steel speculates that James's wardrobe, which had been his gran's, may be the oldest object in the house, providing a bridgehead. A maelstrom of sound erupts, including a ghostly voice asking "*Why did you kill me?*"

The pizza delivery man rings the front doorbell but can't get a reply even though there are lights on. When he presses the doorbell again, it starts playing a tinny version of the *Lullaby* and electrocutes him. A ghostly voice says "*I loved you, so why did you kill me?*"

Inside the house, Steel revives James and tells him that something gave the ghost a boost of energy. The black void is hissing with voices, so he closes the bedroom door. Steel can't contact Sapphire with his telepathy and heads

GABY SOWERSBY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 1

TRAITS
Eccentric (Minor) – Erratic and unstable
Emotional Complication (Major) – The death of Joshua

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

downstairs to find that she has collapsed. The TV is playing repeated voices ("*I love you", "I love you too*") until James unplugs it.

Within her own mind, Sapphire hears a child's voice chanting "*Girls and boys come out to play*". Something appears to her in Jen's form.

Meanwhile, Steel is asking Jen about the music box and what happened to Sapphire. But James and Jen now both believe that they're preparing for the party before James went away to university.

In her mind, Sapphire is still talking to the person she thought was Jen, but it can look and sound like anyone. It doesn't have a face or a voice, so it uses those of other people. It doesn't know what happened to Sapphire, but wants things to be how they should have been.

JAMES SOWERSBY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Knowledge 3

TRAITS
Brave
Devotion – His family

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

It's trying to put thing right.

James believes it's September, but Sapphire and Steel arrived in December. Gaby wakes and thinks Steel has come to fix the electrics.

The thing in Sapphire's mind tells her that the rest of the family are scared of it. It takes on the face of the pizza delivery man, who it says is dead. It made a deal with something that has given it the power to control the TV set, but it won't say who or what that is or what else it has promised them.

Sapphire is telepathically contacted by Steel, but the thing has gone. He needs her to stay here and talk to whoever is here. She asks whether Steel loves her, to which he replies of course. Steel departs, and the thing reappears.

Gaby and Jen are singing childish versions of carols and the family begins opening Christmas presents. James's is a toy dinosaur, which Jen says should have the name Joshua, upsetting Gaby.

Steel contacts Sapphire, who updates him on what she has learned. He tells her that Time is breaking through in James's bedroom. It is using Sapphire to turn back time for the family,

JEN SOWERSBY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 2, Knowledge 1

TRAITS
Devotion – Her family
Distinctive
Stubborn

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

making them relive their memories. Sapphire realises that the music box is somehow connected. In the waking world, she is still holding it. The thing reappears in her mind and tells Sapphire that, with her help, its plan is almost complete. It says its name is Joshua Sowersby and that it has been told to kill Sapphire to stop her preventing it from putting things right. As it attacks her, she calls out to Steel for help.

Steel gets James, now a child, to take the music box out of Sapphire's hand. He screams in pain as it burns him. Different aspects of the thing talk among themselves, disappointed that Sapphire has broken free. It claims that the rest of the family killed Joshua.

The Sowersbys have reverted to normal. Sapphire wakes and asks Gaby who Joshua is. She says he's dead, and then retreats into humming the *Lullaby* as shock overwhelms her. Steel discovers the body of the pizza man.

Sapphire states that Josh is Gaby's son. Gaby confirms that he died and that his ashes are in the music box. Josh was Jen's twin brother, but when Gaby was pregnant, something was found to be wrong. The unborn Jen was dominant and taking Josh's nutrients, slowly

JOSH

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**N/A**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Fear Factor 1
Immaterial
Invisible (Special Bad)
Obligation (Major) – The Darkness
Possess – Anyone holding the music box
Psychic
Telepathy
Telekinesis – Josh can use this to work the music box and control electrical items
Shapeshift (Special) – Primarily voices
Weakness (Major) – If any link in the chain that maintains his existence is broken (music box, Jen or the Darkness), Josh dissipates

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 6

killing her brother. There was nothing the doctors could do, and although Jen was born healthy, Josh was stillborn. Gaby suffered from terrible postnatal depression. She decided to use the music box, a family heirloom, to store Josh's ashes in. Her husband didn't understand and left her. This is all a shock to James and Jen.

Sapphire tells them that Josh doesn't know what state he is in; he cannot understand why Jen is alive and he isn't. Sapphire and Steel confer among themselves. They know that Time has made a deal with Josh and is using Sapphire to take time back to when he can live instead of Jen. It's a chain: Joshua is getting stronger as puberty is changing Jen, enabling him to manipulate electrical items, his existence allowing Time to break through, and his existence is only due to Jen. They need to break the chain.

Sapphire explains to the family that they need to destroy Joshua. Steel says they must give him to Time, which is feeding off his existence. But nether Sapphire nor Steel can touch the music box. James volunteers to take it upstairs to the void beyond his bedroom door. Steel and Gaby go with him while Sapphire and Jen wait downstairs.

Upstairs, they find the void has spread. The music box gets hotter as Joshua has realised what is happening. The void grows and starts coming for them as Josh's strength increases at an impossible rate.

Downstairs, Joshua communicates with Jen through the television, asking how could she kill him. In panic, Jen smashes the TV screen. Sapphire asks about the song that Jen was listening to earlier, *Get Out of My Head*. It's a song about suicide.

Time traps Steel, James and Gaby upstairs as the void grows. Sapphire relates this to Jen, who realises that she is a link in the chain they have to break. If Jen dies now, it will stop what is happening and save her mother and brother. Sapphire hands her a piece of the broken TV screen, which Jen uses to slit her wrists. Sapphire comforts Jen by humming Brahms' *Lullaby* as the girl's life ebbs away.

Upstairs, Time retreats as its hold weakens. Sapphire calls for Steel to come down, and they depart before Gaby and James discover what Jen has done.

TRIGGERS

The trigger is the music box with Joshua's ashes stored within it. Its continued existence (and Gaby's lack of closure) has allowed the Darkness to make a deal with the unborn Josh, offering him the chance of life in return for giving it power and an access point into reality.

IRREGULARITIES

Although referred to as Time throughout the story, the main irregularity here actually seems to be the Darkness (see *Sapphire & Steel Have Been Assigned!*), which has created a breach for itself in James's bedroom. It is providing

Josh with the power to influence the real world, principally control over electrical objects.

Josh is the stillborn twin brother of Jen. His intellect is greater than that of a baby, but he is still childlike. As well as turning the music box on and off and controlling the television set, Josh has psychic powers and has recently begun speaking to Jen in particular.

Josh's weakness is the chain that links him, the music box, Jen and the Darkness. If any of these links is removed, the chain is destroyed and the Darkness is defeated.

Sapphire and Steel cannot touch the music box. When Sapphire picks it up, she is possessed by Josh and encounters him in her mind. It's unclear whether humans are similarly affected, but James isn't possessed when he picks it up, so possibly not.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire uses her senses to gain information on the history of the house and the land it's on. She also gains a little information on the Sowersbys, enough to know they have secrets but not enough to learn what they are.

Sapphire briefly hypnotises Jen, but the girl is able to break free of her control before revealing anything. Sapphire also turns time for the family back by several years, but this is while being manipulated by the Darkness so it's presumably boosting her powers.

When Jen asks Sapphire if she's Steel's girlfriend, Sapphire replies "*Oh no, we're both… free agents*." Later, when Steel contacts Sapphire telepathically, he confirms he loves her (and that she's pretty).

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This story is a much more adult one than the preceding audio, and the ending in particular is deserving of the content warning placed on it by Big Finish. The GM will need to ensure that their players are mature enough to deal with the baby loss and suicide aspects of the story, and that these won't be triggering events for anyone around the table.

The ending is easily the most devastating since that of *Assignment II*. Perhaps even more so, as here it's the empathic Sapphire rather than the more cold-hearted Steel who calmly sacrifices a human to defeat the enemy, and this by encouraging Jen, an adolescent girl, to commit suicide. It's a very bleak resolution which players might baulk at, understandably so.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Gabrielle Sowersby:** Gaby, mother of Jennifer and James. Seems distracted and neurotic, occasionally paranoid.
- **Jennifer Sowersby:** Jen, adolescent sister of James, of whom she is a little jealous. Has a rebellious streak, playing her music too loud and experimenting with dyeing her hair. She's strong-willed enough to resist Sapphire's mental control.
- **James Sowersby:** Jen's older brother; known as Jamie when younger. Has recently started at university (and has grown a beard since leaving home).
- **Joshua Sowersby:** The ghostly presence in the Sowersbys' house. Josh is Jen's twin brother who was stillborn but has been given a chance of life by the Darkness.
- **Tom Jarvis:** Pizza delivery man electrocuted by Joshua, who uses his voice and (in Sapphire's mind) form.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Rather than suicide *resolving* an assignment, it could also be the *cause* of an irregularity, the circumstances or emotions surrounding the act providing a trigger for the Darkness to manifest. Such a scenario would again be for a mature group of players.

ALL FALL DOWN

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in July 2005; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series One* in March 2024.

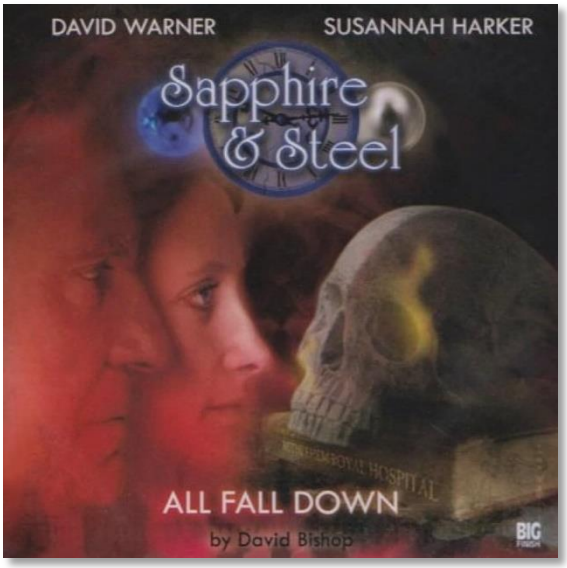
SYNOPSIS

On the platform of a London Underground station, Dr Webber is driven to distraction by the sound of a ghostly child's voice singing *Ring a Ring o' Roses*, which nobody else can hear.

Sapphire arrives on a nearby street and meets Steel, who says he walked here. She tells him they are in one of the oldest parts of London, not far from the city wall. Steel complains that there are so many old buildings and monuments around, how are they supposed to isolate what they're here to investigate? Sapphire confirms that the area is steeped in history. The cobbles have been here for hundreds of years and have been covered dozens of times with dirt, rubble, bitumen and even blood, as this street took a direct hit during the Blitz. Two people died here, a mother and child, but it's probably not relevant. She senses that the trigger is inside a nearby building housing the City of London Corporation Archives. She also senses anguish, as if somebody inside the building is troubled. The building itself is condemned and is due for demolition within a month.

Sapphire and Steel knock on the Archive's door, which is answered by Professor Joyce Fleming. Joyce assumes they're from the Corporation and says that their colleague arrived a few minutes ago and is already inspecting the building. She can't remember his name, blaming it on short term memory loss.

Joyce offers to give the elementals a guided tour. As she leads them down to the basement, she tells them about the project, which



started about nineteen months ago.

Elsewhere in the building, Dr Webber is again tormented by the ghostly voice chanting the same nursery rhyme as the sound of more corporeal footsteps approaches.

Joyce explains that since its formation, the City of London Corporation has amassed a vast, ad hoc archive of documents. Anything from official papers and old medical records, to items discovered during construction work and even wax cylinders of sound recordings. Their first task was to catalogue the items. Now, they're digitally scanning them for upload onto the internet. Steel considers this to be dangerous, as the trigger, if accessed, could then release something anywhere in the world. Sapphire senses something else here, but she can't seem to focus on it.

In the scanning room, Joyce introduces them to Mary who has just uploaded the last sound file, which has taken longer than expected due to electrical problems. She's a student who's been here since the end of last term and is due to go back to college shortly. Mary mentions the ghosts which have frightened off several other students. They aren't seen, just heard as

children chanting rhymes. She also thinks she recognises Sapphire from somewhere.

Joyce then takes them up to see Dr Webber, who is arguing with the man whom she has assumed to be Sapphire and Steel's colleague. It's none other than Silver, who telepathically warns them that Webber seems nervous and unstable. He overheard Webber shouting at something that wasn't there when Silver entered the room. Sapphire confirms that Webber is overwrought, his heart pounding.

Silver has been asking Webber about some papers concerning a 17th Century plague pit that was uncovered in Charterhouse Square less than a mile away, along with several artefacts. Joyce claims that any trace of bubonic plague will have perished long ago, so there's no risk of infection.

Telepathically, Silver tells his colleagues that he thinks there's a catalyst here as well as a trigger. A catalyst is something that increases the rate of reaction without itself undergoing any permanent change. It could be any item in the building.

Joyce takes Sapphire and Silver to get a cup of tea, while Steel remains with Webber. Sapphire is concerned that Silver, a Specialist, arrived first, which doesn't usually happen. When the others have gone, Steel asks Webber who he was shouting at earlier, but Webber denies he did any such thing.

Joyce tells Sapphire and Silver that she doesn't believe in ghosts, then suffers a sudden pain in her head. She has only suffered from them in the last day or two, but it's excruciating. Silver spots Webber outside holding a lighted match.

Steel summons Sapphire to the basement as Mary has remembered something important. She has recognised Sapphire's voice from a recording on a wax cylinder which dates to 1892. The main recording is of a girl singing *Ring a Ring o' Roses*, but with Sapphire's faint voice repeating the rhyme. Time has already broken out, over a hundred years earlier!

Sapphire uses her mental powers to help convince Mary that it isn't her voice and is just a coincidence. When Mary leaves to get a coffee, Sapphire and Steel discuss that the breakout occurred over a hundred years ago, and that the Operators sent to deal with it then must have only contained it, not removed it. Something must have revived it again or removed its containment. Steel telepathically tells Silver to get all the information he can on the cylinder and how it was made. Steel goes to speak to Webber again, as he believes the man knows something important.

Sapphire speaks with Joyce, whose head is still splitting. Joyce says the recording is probably from the Webern files. Anton Webern was a German photographer and sound recordist who visited London in 1892 to make portraits and voice recordings of wealthy clients. He also liked to photograph the insane.

In Dr Webber's office, Steel finds the man playing with a kerosene lamp and dementedly muttering the nursery rhyme. Webber pleads with Steel to take the girl in his head away. Steel contacts Sapphire and Silver. The man's mind seems to be collapsing in on itself,

presumably as a result of contact with the breakout. Webber says the girl doesn't like the smell of kerosene as it reminds of her of the flames, and that her name is Maldeb.

Mary tells Silver about the Graphophone, a machine she borrowed from the V&A Museum to play the wax cylinders. She also tells him about the poverty of her childhood. Silver is fascinated by her idea for a machine that could read the history of old buildings like a Graphophone can read wax cylinders. He starts to modify the Graphophone while Mary fetches some old journals.

Joyce produces a box of disturbing photographs taken by Webern during his visit to the Bedlam Royal Hospital in 1892. She says that Webern claimed he could draw the madness out of the insane with a combination of his photographs and sound recordings made by the Graphophone, which he helped to develop for the purpose. But Webern disappeared the day before he was due to deliver his findings to the Royal Society. Only the photographs and recordings remained to prove he ever existed.

Steel returns to check in with Sapphire. His arms are itching and he has a curious ring-shaped rash on them, the first symptoms of plague. The elementals link this to the papers from the plague pit and the nursery rhyme. Joyce returns and hasn't been able to find Mary. Sapphire goes to look for her in the basement, while Steel contacts Silver and tells him to wait outside Webber's office. Joyce realises that Maldeb, the name of the ghostly girl, is Bedlam backwards. She starts to sneeze repeatedly.

Silver knocks on Webber's door, which is locked from the inside, but there's just silence. Sapphire arrives, and they notice the smell of kerosene. Sapphire contacts Mary telepathically. She's inside Webber's office; he's locked them both in. Suddenly, Webber pours kerosene over them both and grabs Mary's cigarette lighter.

PROFESSOR JOYCE FLEMING

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Knowledge 4 (AoE: History)

TRAITS
Forgetful

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Joyce tells Steel that Bedlam survived the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire a year later, but it has moved several times. In 1948, it was finally merged with another unit. Steel is summoned by Sapphire to help with Webber.

Sapphire's telepathic contact with Mary is fading as if being blocked, until she falls silent. Sapphire and Silver hear a girl chanting the rhyme, and another voice calling "*Bring out your dead!*" which rises to a cacophony.

When Joyce becomes angry at Steel's rudeness, he tells her he's not from the Corporation and uses his mental powers to convince her he's from a higher power. They arrive at Webber's office, which is blocked by a wall of sound. Silver uses the modified Graphophone to create a counter-signal to

DR WEBBER

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 5 (AoE: History)

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Major) – A pawn of Maldeb
Eccentric (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

block the noise. Sapphire manages to contact Mary again, who can see a shadow growing bigger. Mary screams as it comes for her, then falls silent. The door opens of its own accord, but the room beyond is empty.

Joyce tries to phone the police using her mobile, which fascinates Silver who causes it to spontaneously disassemble in her hand. Sapphire convinces her to come back upstairs while Steel and Silver search Webber's office. Sapphire sensed a powerful force dragging Mary and Webber into the past.

Silver discovers scorch marks on the floor and charred paper, indicating that the fire was man-made, presumably by Webber. He detects that the paper dates back at least a hundred years, something from the files lining the shelves. He and Steel are interrupted by a

MARY

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Knowledge 3

TRAITS
Distinctive

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

summons from Sapphire.

Outside, police sirens can be heard approaching, while inside, Joyce has passed out after vomiting. Sapphire places a ten-second time loop around the police, stopping them from entering for several hours. With Steel's help, Silver uses his powers to seal the building off as a temporary measure, locking and securing all the external doors.

Steel's rash has stopped itching but the skin around it is turning black and dying. Between them, he and Joyce have all the symptoms of bubonic plague. Although Joyce believes the plague couldn't have survived in the pit, she didn't known about the unusual conditions in which it was stored, close to the scene of a time breakout. The elementals don't know why Sapphire and Silver are unaffected.

Outside, more police are being sent to the Archive as the patrol already there aren't responding to Control. While working on the Graphophone in the scanning room, Silver is confronted by a man resembling Dr Webber. This is Anton Webern, who asks who the subject of today's treatment will be. Silver summons Sapphire, who is introduced as the next subject. Webern starts the Graphophone

and begins to question her, creating the recording from 1892 that Mary discovered earlier. Silver scans Webern and confirms he dates from 1892; in fact, he's *in* 1892, in a bubble of the past that has floated forward to the present. Webern concludes his study of Sapphire and vanishes.

Steel arrived to hear much of the conversation and shows them Webber's journal. The first and final entries are in the same hand. Sapphire detects that, although the first was written by a quill pen on August 3rd, 1665, the final entry was written by ballpoint pen earlier today. Webber must have had quite a shock when he found his own handwriting in a journal that hadn't been opened for over three hundred years! Steel believes the journal is the catalyst for the breakout of a century ago which could only be contained. Now, the elementals have been sent to finish the task. Webber has somehow been given the power to go back into the past to write the journal.

Steel collapses. Outside, more police arrive, while Sapphire's time loop is close to breaking. Silver goes to investigate, and sees that the loop has been breached. Sapphire can't create another for so many people, so the elementals must rely on the sealed doors keeping the police out. Sapphire is in mental contact with Silver when her voice abruptly stops.

Sapphire is talking to a girl singing *Ring a Ring o' Roses*. A man who calls himself Webber suddenly appears along with Mary, who is introduced as his ward. They say they are here to view the inmates. Silver arrives and senses they're from 1811, but they abruptly vanish.

Steel begins muttering "*Maldeb*" repeatedly. Sapphire and Silver take him upstairs to make him comfortable. A police officer banging on the main door is caught in another time loop, but not one set up by Sapphire. A voice repeatedly pleading "*Lord have mercy on us*" is heard. Sapphire realises they are the words of a family locked in their home with a plague victim and condemned to die. This location must have been the site of such a plague house! Silver says that they are now in the same situation, trapped with plague victims. A voice of someone collecting corpses calls "*Bring out your dead!*" It's another time bubble from the past.

Suddenly, everything goes quiet. Sapphire, Silver and Steel are all alone, cut off from the present. Steel comes round for a few moments and warns Sapphire that she might not make it

MALDEB

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**6**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 5, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Alien
Invisible (Special Good)
Immaterial – But can become tangible
Possess – Requires physical contact
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special)
Telepathy
Time Manipulation – As Sapphire (see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p12)
Vortex – Between 17th and 21st Centuries
Weakness (Major) – Maldeb is linked to Webber's journal; destroying it will also destroy her

TECH LEVEL: 4 **STORY POINTS:** 8

back, but she doesn't understand from where. Sapphire heads off to help Silver with his theory of how to stop the breakout. In Webber's office, Silver is working on the machine he created from the Graphophone, a device to facilitate psychic communication with the past. Sapphire reads from Webber's journal to synchronise the device's settings. It seems he became a Bedlam inmate who had visions of the future and believed himself to be wrongfully incarcerated.

Sapphire lights some of the journal's blank pages to recreate a former passage in the corner of the office and see where it leads to. She and Silver hear Mary's voice. She's somewhere black and cold, and all she can hear are people screaming. Sapphire starts walking towards the fire and is only stopped by Silver and a telepathic message from Steel.

Sapphire is convinced they have to go back into the past to rescue Mary and save Steel and Joyce. Silver argues that it's too dangerous so she asks him to create something to help her. He starts working on a kind of homing signal linked to the modified Graphophone.

Sapphire checks on Steel, who is burning with fever, and Joyce, who is cold. Before she goes back to Silver, Steel tells her to remember the Doppler effect.

Sapphire again creates the passageway by burning pages from the journal. It leads to 1665, the time of the original breakout, and Sapphire walks into it, still in contact with Silver. Initially, she only hears indistinct voices, then Mary screaming. A yellow, dancing light appears ahead of her, the other end of the passage, There, she meets Dr Webber, who reveals he has been trying to lure her back to this time. She realises he is the trigger.

Mary is stranded somewhere along the passageway between 1665 and the present. Silver boosts his device to contact Mary and guide her back.

Sapphire analyses Webber and discovers that he's both born in 1956 and is from 1665 and is Anton Webern in 1892, and many others. Webber says he was first born in the 17th Century, the only child of a poor family. He was lonely and created an imaginary friend. He grew up and she remained with him as a little girl. People thought him mad when he talked and joked and argued with her. Her name is Maldeb. When Webber died, she ensured he was reincarnated time and again, always moving closer to the end of his cycle of lives before finding himself back at the beginning, in the 17th Century. But he finally learned how to send shards of time forward, which is why Steel warned Sapphire of a Doppler effect, one affecting time rather than sound.

Webber has grown tired of his repeated existence, but he has learned much, almost too much. Sapphire realises that this isn't Webber, but Maldeb. The girl reveals she wants Sapphire to take her place in the loop.

Silver is still attempting to help Mary reach the present. He gets her to chant *Ring a Ring o' Roses* so he can lock onto her voice and guide her back.

Maldeb says that most of Webber's life stories were true, with just a few adjustments at the edges. She is tired of the repetitive cycle and intends to take Sapphire's identity. Sapphire tries to tell Silver of what is happening, but Maldeb cuts her contact with him. She says she gave Steel the plague to prevent him from coming here; Joyce just got in the way.

If Maldeb touches Sapphire, she is lost. Sapphire puts them both in a time loop, trapping them here. But Maldeb is stronger than Sapphire, and the elemental can't maintain the loop forever.

Mary has made it back to the present and gives Silver an idea when she mentions Webber's journal. If he burns the entire journal, he may be able to re-establish contact with Sapphire.

His voice reaches Sapphire in the time loop, just as Maldeb bursts into flames and is destroyed.

Sapphire leaps through the flames and back to the present, to the street outside the Archive where she's met by Silver and Steel. Silver explains that, once the journal was destroyed, the breakout was repelled forever. Everything was resolved. Dr Webber never truly existed in this time; he was just a disguise that Maldeb wore. Silver bids farewell and vanishes, while Sapphire and Steel decide to walk back together. After they have departed, a ghostly voice chants *Ring a Ring o' Roses*.

TRIGGERS

Silver is quick to realise that there is not just a trigger but a catalyst, described as "*something that increases the rate of reaction without itself undergoing any permanent change*". This is eventually identified as Webber's journal, which the original Webber began writing in 1665. The present day Webber found it among the records being classified at the Archive and was shocked to see his own handwriting in it. The journal links the story's present day to 1665 and is powerful enough to be used to create portals between the two time periods by setting pages from it alight in a place where a physical passageway used to be. Burning the entire book is Maldeb's downfall.

The wax cylinder with a recording of Sapphire's voice from 1892 might be mistaken for a trigger, but it's a red herring or at best a clue.

IRREGULARITIES

The ghostly girl, Maldeb, is the major irregularity here. She is presumably an agent of Time as she has some control over time, being able to create time loops, recreate the plague virus (by pulling a sample to the present from the 17th Century) and even travel through time.

Maldeb started life as the imaginary friend of the first Webber, who was born in the 17th Century, before its place was taken by an entity from the corridor of Time that had broken through into our reality. It achieved a form of immortality by recreating versions of Webber (or Webern) whenever one died, up until the early 21st Century. At this point, the cycle restarts, and the final Dr Webber disappears into the past under Maldeb's influence, returning to 1665 where the entity must begin again. By now though, it has become bored with the endless repetition of this cycle and wants a new life, intending to take the place of Sapphire to gain one. This story can therefore be seen as a trap for her.

Contact with Maldeb's (time-accelerated) plague requires a Difficulty 15 Resolve + Strength roll to avoid automatically taking 2(1/2/3) damage every 15 minutes thereafter.

When Maldeb is defeated and destroyed, all the versions of Webber it had created over the past three centuries vanish as if they had never existed. Until then, the Webbers seem to think of Maldeb only as an imaginary friend that torments them.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND SILVER)

Although Sapphire seemingly appears out of nowhere as normal at the start of this story, Steel says he walked there. At the end of the story, they both decide to walk back. To and from where isn't made clear.

Sapphire analyses the street they arrive in to learn its history. She later calms Mary down with her mind, as does Steel with Joyce

(though he's using his Elemental Agent trait and spending a Story Point to do so). Sapphire is able to open a portal back to 1665 by burning pages from Webber's journal. As the journal is the catalyst, it presumably allows her to boost her normal ability to manipulate time.

Steel contracts the plague, indicating that the elementals aren't immune to diseases after all (which makes the presence of the virus in *Assignment V* more of a direct threat to Sapphire and Steel). Despite Steel's usual robustness, he soon weakens and eventually falls unconscious. Sapphire and Silver wonder why they don't also contract the plague. This isn't conclusively explained but is probably because Maldeb directed it at Steel to prevent him being the one to travel back to 1665 (with Joyce being caught in the cross-fire).

As in *Assignment VI*, Silver arrives before Sapphire and Steel, which isn't the normal procedure. This anomaly remains unexplained in the story. Silver is again flirtatious with Sapphire, to Steel's annoyance. He and Sapphire enjoy a cup of tea, but Steel declines one. Silver later berates Steel for his cold detachment from the "*ordinary people*".

Among Silver's accomplishments in this story, he destroys Joyce's mobile phone remotely, seals all the entrances to the building and performs several analyses, some of which are outside his normal remit and so cost him Story Points. He also modifies the Graphophone to communicate through time.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

As in *Assignment I*, the nursery rhyme *Ring a Ring o' Roses* (from which the audio's title is taken) is a recurring motif in this story. But unlike in that assignment, it's not the trigger, just something used to add atmosphere to the story.

The name Maldeb being 'Bedlam' backwards is perhaps too obvious a clue to reveal to a group of players early on. The GM might wish to keep this information back until later or change the girl's name to something different. Though realising there's a loose connection to Bedlam doesn't necessarily help the elementals all that much.

Steel is effectively absent from much of the latter half of the story, having succumbed to the plague. His place as Sapphire's partner is taken by Silver, whose talents prove useful in defeating Maldeb.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Silver:** An elemental agent; specialist in all things technical. See *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* for Silver's stats.
- **Dr Webber:** Troubled head archivist haunted by an invisible child. Also appears as Anton Webern, a 19th Century photographer and sound recordist who is identical to Webber apart from his clothing and a bushy moustache. Webber is in fact one of numerous versions that exist between the 17th and early 21st Centuries.
- **Professor Joyce Fleming:** An archivist. Excellent on puzzles and remembering historical facts, but hopeless on the here and now.
- **Mary:** Student working at the Archive between terms. Facial piercings and tattoos mask a friendly personality.
- **Maldeb:** Imaginary friend of Dr Webber; actually an agent of Time. Has the form of a little girl but can assume others, that of Webber in particular.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Mary's suggestion of a machine capable of reading the history of buildings is perhaps a nod to stone tape theory. Although Silver thought the idea to be interesting, it sounds like it would be a trigger allowing Time to break through!

THE LIGHTHOUSE

ADVISORY WARNING

This story has an advisory content warning for homophobia, family domestic abuse, graphic murder scenes and themes surrounding suicide.

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in August 2005; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series One* in March 2024.

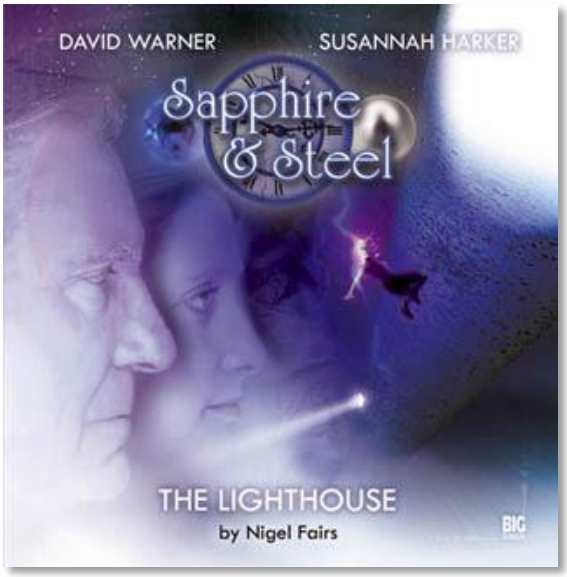
SYNOPSIS

Voices echo round Penryth Point Lighthouse as Nicholas and Suzy Phillips arrive during a storm. With them is Adrian, the architect who will be converting the lighthouse into the couple's new home. The power is out but there is the sound of machinery moving and then a man sobbing. Suzy goes to find Nick, who is looking around, while more voices echo, then the man's voice: "*I'm sorry… sorry…*"

In the lamp room many years later, an old man is painting a younger man, Mike. Mike talks incessantly while the artist is taciturn. They hear voices echoing around, but the old man denies that he has kids.

Back in the past, Suzy finds Nick, who tells her that his father used to be the lighthouse keeper, and that everything inside it was his. A clock is ticking even though nobody has wound it. Nick is annoyed that Suzy has told Adrian that she's pregnant, and accuses her of flirting with him, even though Adrian is gay. Suzy doesn't understand why his mood has changed so since arriving here. Nick explains that it brings back old memories. They both head up to see the lamp room.

In the later time zone, Mike encounters Steel while the old man is elsewhere. Steel demands to know the year.



In the past, Adrian bumps into Sapphire and thinks they may have met before.

Nick and Suzy reach the lamp room and step outside onto the balcony as the storm has abated a little, where Nick spots that their boat has gone. The lamp suddenly starts working and the foghorn sounds. Suzy spots somebody walking across the footbridge, though Nick insists there isn't one.

Adrian tells Sapphire it's September 4th, but he fades away. She contacts Steel and tells him about Adrian.

Nick confronts Adrian and accuses him of having a friend dress up as his father as a joke. Suzy also realises that there's no footbridge.

Sapphire tells Steel that it was difficult to tell the time period Adrian was from. The main body of the lighthouse was built in 1858. There's a new window on the third floor and the electricity was installed in 1953. She says that Adrian's clothes were all synthetic fibres, none later than 1972, thirty-two years ago. But there's something different about this place, something she hasn't felt before.

While Nick phones the emergency services to report that they're stranded, Adrian asks Suzy if the figure she saw could have been Nick's father. She tells Adrian that Nick's father is in a home after suffering a stroke last year. The emergency services tell Nick they won't be able to get out to them until the storm has died down. Nick admits that he already knew Adrian, something he had kept from Suzy.

Sapphire realises that time has been fragmented and is folding in on itself, with little bits of time hurtling out of control. At the moment, it feels calm like in the eye of a storm.

Despite Nick's protests, Adrian tells Suzy that they used to play here as children, and about an incident when Nick attacked his father with a knife. His father knocked Nick out and locked the boy in the coal room. But that was all a long time ago. The last time Nick and Adrian were both here was the night Kennedy died, nine years ago.

Sapphire tells Steel that footprints in the coal dust are from a later time than Adrian's, from the 1990s at least, maybe even later, as if someone had been walking through time.

Adrian opens a bottle of whiskey and passes round the glasses. He suggests they tell ghost stories and claims he saw a ghost here once, of a woman who was murdered by the keeper back in the 1940s. Nick says she fell onto the rocks, but Adrian insists she was pushed.

Steel asks Sapphire about the trigger for the time storm. They hear a man sobbing, but Sapphire can't tell who the sobbing man is, or when.

Still talking about the dead woman, Adrian tells Suzy that the old keeper had seen things in the First World War. He saw something else that night that sent him mad, and he threw the woman out of the lamp room and never spoke another word. The body wasn't discovered for years, until Nick's father found it. They never found out who she was. Adrian claims to have seen her ghost down in the coal room. She had really blue eyes. Suddenly, they hear noises from the lamp room.

Sapphire and Steel try to locate the sobbing man, but they are in an echo of the eye of the storm. Everything is reversed, a muddle of voices and sobbing, and a child's voice: "*I'm coming to get you*." They open the door to the coal room and find a boy hiding, but he vanishes. Tally marks recording the passage of days have been carved into the wall by a knife and sealed with blood. There's also a child's picture drawn with a wax crayon in 1958, but not by the boy they saw, who came later. Sapphire says the picture contains pain and sadness. She suddenly senses a child being locked in, alone and afraid.

Up in the lamp room, Nick finds a radio playing music, while downstairs, Suzy tells Adrian about how she got together with Nick. She

believes Nick is sad about something. Adrian tells Suzy Nick's father is an alcoholic.

Adrian goes to stoke the boiler to warm the place up and encounters the old man, who has blood on him. The old man recognises Adrian and thinks he's been dreaming. He begins babbling about hurting people. Adrian believes the man is Nick's father and goes to fetch Nick.

The elementals see a boy pleading with his father. Sapphire says they must stop the new arrivals coming to the lighthouse.

The old man finds Suzy and insists she must leave, otherwise it will all happen again!

Adrian tells Nick his father is here, but Nick is incredulous as he's in a home.

Sapphire tells Steel she feels the dead around them. Steel rips the floorboards up and they discover the charred bones of a woman. Sapphire gasps that there are other bodies under the floorboards, behind the walls, everywhere here. Most of the bodies had their throats cut and two were shot, but Sapphire can't tell by whom. She hears a clock chiming, then vanishes.

Back in the future, Mike is still being painted by the old man. He asks about the men in the other paintings; the old man says they were ships in the night.

Adrian insists that Nick should tell the truth: his father hasn't had a stroke, he had a breakdown and tried to kill somebody. Nick had him sectioned and covered it up. But Nick denies it. He hurries to find Suzy before the old man does, but she's gone. He angrily blames Adrian.

The old man tells Mike that his father beat him up once. He never really knew his mother, not really. He can't remember a single word she said to him or even the sound of her voice. They're all dead now though. The old man explains that he must have been a disappointment to his father. Not for being an artist though, as he used to work in the City. They suddenly hear Sapphire's voice calling out. The old man goes to investigate.

Sapphire can hear a clock, even though it has stopped. The old man bursts in but can't see her. Back in the lamp room, Mike again sees Steel. But Steel still can't be seen by the old man when he returns with a knife.

Adrian accuses Nick of playing psychotic games on him when they were boys, such as Nick pretending to be his father and locking Adrian in the coal room for hours. Nick used to beg Adrian to come here and they often fell asleep in each other's arms. Adrian remembers all the bruises on Nick's skin. But Nick broke his heart with the hurtful things he said the last time they saw each other.

In the lamp room, Mike tells the old man that the lighthouse must be haunted as he's seen someone. The old man asks how much he would have to pay Mike to take him away and start a new life together. But he suddenly attacks Mike with the knife, accusing him of only thinking of money. Steel is there but still unseen; he tells Sapphire he thinks he's about to witness a murder.

Adrian tells Nick he's come to terms with being

NICK PHILLIPS (1972)

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Craft (Painting) 2, Fighting 1, Subterfuge 3, Transport 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Minor) – Secretly gay
Emotional Complication (Major) – His feelings towards his parents and the suppression of his true sexuality

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

gay, but Nick has instead decided to toe the family line and deny his true sexuality.

The old man taunts Mike and tells the young man about a time his father used a knife to cut his back open from top to bottom. He stabs Mike repeatedly and watches as he bleeds to death.

Sapphire contacts Steel again. Steel says he watched the old man burn Mike's corpse in the old generator. Sapphire tells him that she can see Nick and Adrian in 1972. They are asleep together, until Suzy enters and accuses them of putting on quite a show last night. She very nearly didn't come back, but now she has, she

SUZY PHILLIPS

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 2, Knowledge 2, Transport 2

TRAITS
Charming
Devotion - Nick

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

realises that Adrian wanted to be stuck out here with Nick.

The old man now has a gun, and Steel thinks he's going to commit suicide. But he changes his mind and picks up the knife again.

In another, overlapping time frame, the old man sees Suzy. Steel gasps that they are about to do a deal and must be stopped. He needs Sapphire, but she's down in the coal room. She's been caught up in the ripples of the time storm and pulled down here.

In 1972, Suzy talks with Nick in private and gives him an ultimatum. He has five minutes to join her at the boat and never see Adrian again. If not, their marriage is over.

ADRIAN

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Craft (Architecture) 3, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 1, Transport 1

TRAITS
Attractive

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

In the overlapping time zone, the old man and Suzy realise they have a chance to stop things. If Suzy stays, the old man knows he will do awful things to her, so he urges her to leave. The time storm erupts and Steel tries to save Sapphire from it, only to find themselves both outside time.

In the lighthouse, Adrian tries to find Nick, but is confronted by the old man who is covered in blood. But this time, it's his own. Steel realises that the old man made a deal with Mike so that they can retrace their steps and rewrite time.

Sapphire succeeds in taking her and Steel back to where they were, but it's both 1972 and 2004. They see Nick confront the old man, who tells him to stay with Adrian. He knows what this place means to Nick, and that Adrian understands him. Nick's father may have mistreated him, but the old man claims that Nick will himself go on to do far worse things to Suzy and to others, a lifetime of abuse. But Nick can end it if he will listen.

Sapphire realises that they are the same person, Nicholas Phillips. In the original timeline, Nick didn't listen to his older self and returned to his wife, only to start abusing her and finally killing her as well as countless other victims. The older Nick wants to change the past by persuading his younger self to leave his wife and stay with Adrian.

Steel doesn't care what happens to them all, just that they need to remove the trigger, the child's painting in the coal room. Sapphire and Steel materialise fully in 1972 and can now be seen by Nick, Suzy and Adrian. The elementals claim to be rival architects from Sapphire, Silver and Steel Associates. But Nick becomes suspicious, so Sapphire distracts him by asking to see the lamp room.

Steel surreptitiously removes the child's drawing from the coal room wall and tears it up. Nick as a child appears and tells him he did it when locked in the coal room. He hated his father and tried to kill him with a knife.

Back in the future, Mike is alive again and

NICK PHILLIPS (2004)

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Craft (Painting) 3, Fighting 3, Subterfuge 3, Transport 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Major) – Serial killer
Emotional Complication (Major) – His sexuality
Wealthy (Minor)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

posing for the older Nick.

But Sapphire and Steel realise that it hasn't worked and the time storm is still happening. Sapphire suggests it may be because there are three people in the relationship: Nick, Suzy and Adrian. They and their emotional bond are also triggers. Sapphire goes to speak to Nick and tries to persuade him to admit his feelings for Adrian and leave Suzy.

Meanwhile, Steel starts to scrape the tally marks off the wall of the coal room, believing them to be the perfect trigger, markers for the passage of time. Around them, time continues to fragment as scenes from various times play out. But events all work out the same, only with Sapphire as one of the victims now.

Steel realises that there must be a third trigger. He persuades the younger Nick to kill himself with the gun. The knife was the third trigger, and Time has been prevented from using it.

The time storm finally ends.

TRIGGERS

The physical triggers for the time storm are Nick's childhood drawing of the lighthouse, which can be found in the coal room, the tally marks on the coal room wall, and the knife that the older Nick kills himself with and which is steeped in blood. The first two are easy to destroy, but the latter is more resilient. In the story, Steel succeeds in persuading the younger Nick to kill himself with the gun, negating the timeline in which the knife becomes a trigger.

A less tangible trigger is the emotional bond between Nick, Suzy and Adrian, linking the two time zones.

IRREGULARITIES

Time is again the enemy in this story. It is present in the time storm but doesn't make a more physical appearance, merely influencing events from behind the scenes.

The time storm jumbles up past and present as well as alternative versions of events, and prevents Sapphire and Steel from fully manifesting at the lighthouse. As well as encountering characters from the different time zones, disembodied voices are heard and details of the lighthouse change abruptly: the power should be off, but is then on; the lamp and foghorn activate without warning; a radio switches itself on; the boat disappears; and a footbridge appears then disappears again. If left unchecked, the time storm would presumably allow the Time entity to break through fully.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire detects that the younger version of Nicholas is wearing clothes made of synthetics dating from no later than 1972. She's also able to determine the age of the lighthouse. But the time storm confuses her senses and she's removed from time (later joined by Steel) and is capable only of observing events.

Steel uses his strength to rip up the floorboards in the bedroom with ease.

The time storm allows Sapphire and Steel to move between 2004 (their present) and 1972, though they have no control over this.

Sapphire and Steel spend most of this story being invisible and inaudible to the other characters, though they occasionally phase into existence for brief periods. This is similar to the final episode of *Assignment V*, when they were outside time and became observers of events rather than participants. Here, they only become fully corporeal after the older Nick tries to change his past.

As an aside, it's interesting to note that when Steel asks why their assignments seem to involve children so much, Sapphire replies

"*They're less aware of time, Steel, less frightened of it. They have less reason to fight it.*"

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is the second audio that Big Finish gave a content warning for, and the GM will need to be sure that their players are be able to handle an assignment which features homophobia, domestic abuse, graphic murder and suicide. It's also another audio which is resolved by a suicide, which may be too grim (and becoming repetitive) for some.

With the information given in the story, the dates for the two main time zones can be calculated as 1972 (for the younger Nick, Suzy and Adrian) and 2004 (for the older Nick and Mike). The revelation that the old man is also Nick comes fairly late on in the story, but players might easily work it out earlier than this.

Sapphire and Steel are largely relegated to being observers of the events in this story, which would be frustrating for a group of players. The GM will probably wish to make the PCs more central to the action by allowing them to become corporeal far earlier in the story.

The constant shifting between the different time zones, in particular when they overlap or when alternative timelines are presented, can be confusing, and the GM will need to keep close track of who is where and when. Similarly, it would be easy to totally confuse the players as to who's who and when, which could make the assignment difficult to resolve.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Nicholas Phillips:** Repressed gay man married to Suzy. In 1972, moved into the old lighthouse where his father was once keeper. Stayed with his wife, but became abusive and eventually killed her before becoming a serial killer, murdering numerous gay men. Also appears as the older version of himself, the old man in 2004
- **Suzy Phillips:** Wife of Nick in 1972; has recently become pregnant.
- **Adrian:** Childhood friend of Nick; is an architect in 1972. Openly gay.
- **Mike:** Young gay man hired by the older Nick as a life model in 2004.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Liminal places such as coasts could be a useful alternative setting for *Sapphire & Steel*, rather than the more usual bases-under-siege. Boundaries and no-man's-lands between one place and another create weak points for Time to take advantage of.

DEAD MAN WALKING

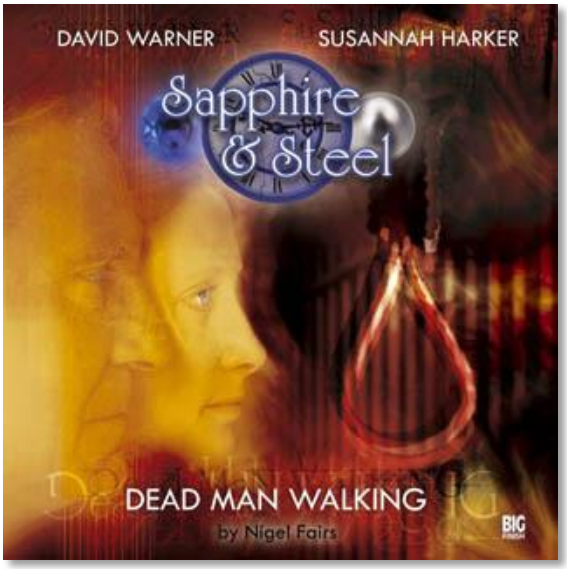
ADVISORY WARNING

This story has an advisory content warning for themes of suicide, domestic abuse, and the subject of child death and murder.

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in September 2005; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series One* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS



In Blackledge Prison, one of the prisoners, Stuart Kilsby, becomes distressed at being locked in a cell. Prison officer Ian Jackson reports back to the governor, Richard Hanmore. Hanmore considers the cell to be unusual as there was a similar incident in it last year, and others in previous reports.

Alone in the cell, Kilsby recites the nursery rhyme *Ding Dong Bell* until a child's voice begins repeating it. Kilsby screams.

Sapphire and Steel arrive the next day, allegedly to inspect the prison. Sapphire knows that Kilsby has died, and an irate Hanmore confirms it was suicide. Sapphire tries to calm Hanmore down by telling him their findings won't be published and the suicide will remain confidential.

Prison counsellor Marian Anderson is talking to a new arrival, Michael Kent. He's spent most of his life inside, but this prison feels different to him.

Hanmore decides he has no choice and assigns Jackson to show the elementals around. Sapphire uses her mental powers to prevent Hanmore contacting the prisons inspectorate, and convinces him their security clearance is all in order.

Kent tells Marian that he felt a kind of premonition in the van, as though he had been here before, even though he hasn't. There's something about this prison that he recognises. He's a light sleeper so he knows that nobody could have come into his cell last night, but there are bruises around his neck.

Jackson is showing Sapphire and Steel around B-Wing, the oldest part of the building, dating from the late 1880s, which Sapphire senses was modified in 1989. She also senses that time is full of contradictions here, nothing is simple.

Marian reports Kent's bruising to the governor, who reacts angrily at the implication that any of the staff were responsible. Calming down, he apologies for his outburst, admitting that his relationship with his wife isn't great at the moment. Hanmore says he thought they were over the worst at the prison and that things were settling down.

Jackson shows Sapphire and Steel the cell in which Kilsby died. He briefly thinks he sees a hangman's noose in the cell before recovering and leaving the elementals to check the cell for themselves. Sapphire detects that it used to be used as something else. There's a trapdoor in the floor, and there are unresolved timelines.

Though not a time storm again; this is more specific. Time has been damaged in the past, but much further back than last night.

In the prison kitchen, Kent begin muttering *Ding Dong Bell* to himself.

Steel asks Sapphire to roll time back to the moment Kilsby died. Sapphire thinks it's dangerous, but Steel insists he must be alone in the cell when she does, as Kilsby was. Sapphire steps outside and closes the cell door before making the attempt. She hears the voice of Kilsby reciting *Ding Dong Bell*, while inside, Steel sees a noose hanging from the ceiling. Suddenly Steel goes quiet in Sapphire's mind.

In the cell, Steel has become Kent, who is threatened by his cellmate to keep quiet.

Sapphire speaks to Hanmore again. He confirms that Kilsby strangled himself. The marks look like hanging, but he cannot explain how, as no rope was found in the cell. She asks to see Kilsby's file and whether a child was involved in his crime. Hanmore says not, but Sapphire speculates that maybe Kilsby was the child.

In the cell, Steel comments that there are now hooks in the ceiling and a trapdoor that weren't there before. His cellmate warns him, as Kent, to shut up. A bell rings for the start of the day, and voices from other cells can be heard wishing Happy New Year. Clearly, he's been here all night.

Jackson reports to the governor that Kent lashed out at him with a soup ladle and is now in solitary confinement. Sapphire asks about him.

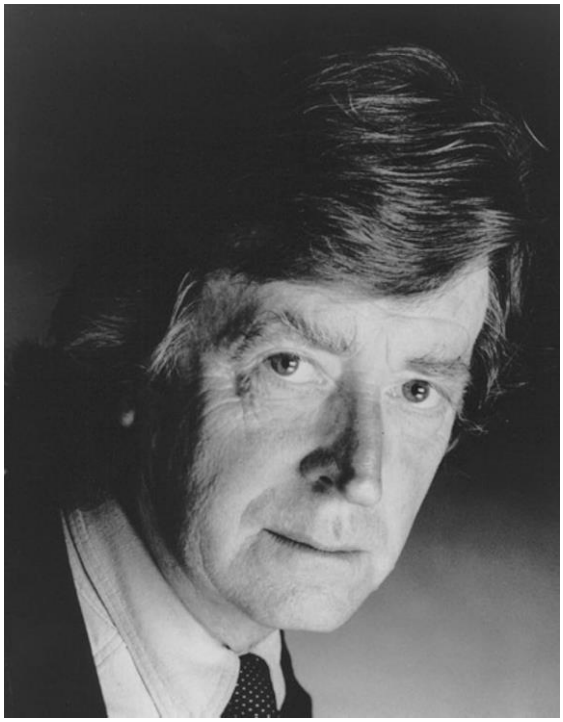
Marian is visiting Kent in solitary. He talks about déjà vu. He seems to know every room and corridor, and he knew Jackson's face even though he's never seen him before in his life. It's as though Jackson already knew everything there is to know about Kent.

Hanmore shows Sapphire the prison records. She finds Kent's file, which shows that he's

been here before, in 1967 for the death of eight-year-old Marcus Jackson. Hanmore is surprised as he didn't know this and says that Kent is here on fraud charges.

In the prison courtyard, and still as Kent, Steel asks what the year is. His cellmate thinks he's trying to get an insanity plea, but the voice of Silver confirms it's 1968 before being cut off.

Kent tells Marian he hated Jackson on sight. He reminded him of Kent's dad, an alcoholic who made him feel useless just by looking at him. Kent begins to mutter *Ding Dong Bell* again. He can't get it out of his head.



Steel's cellmate attacks him before a prison officer intervenes. It's Jackson, who tells the other prisoners to leave Kent alone. He won't be here much longer anyway, as it's been decided to resurrect an old custom tonight, a punishment that fits the crime.

Sapphire finds that Kent was hanged on 1st January, 1968. Hanmore thinks it's a coincidence, but the photo of the Michael Kent from 1967 in the file looks like the Michael Kent who has just been admitted.

In the past, Marcus Jackson is reciting *Ding Dong Bell*. He's hiding from Michael Kent, who finds him and becomes angry. A bottle smashes and there's a struggle.

In the present, Michael Kent gasps for breath, but he can't breathe!

Sapphire notices that the file has changed: there's no record of Kent's admission in 1967. In the courtyard, a human skull is uncovered.

In the prison hospital, Marian is again trying to talk to Kent, but he's in shock and unresponsive. Sapphire uses her telepathy to ask him how he knew where to look for the body. Kent replies that it wasn't him who committed the murder!

In 2004, Silver has arrived and is posing as a pathologist, here to investigate the discovery of the body buried under the courtyard. Silver removes the body's teeth for further analysis.

Sapphire asks Marian about Kent, who is still muttering the nursery rhyme. Marian says that the original version of the rhyme was worse, as the cat drowns in that.

Sapphire heads back to Kilsby's cell and tries to contact Steel. But she finds Silver here instead. He shows her a bone fragment, which she analyses. It's from a male who died thirty-six years ago at the age of twenty-two. She'd thought it might have been from Marcus Jackson, the eight-year-old who Kent was found guilty of killing – in one timeline anyway. Sapphire tells him there are more than one timeline here, and they keep swapping over. There are inconsistencies, but Kent is here in both timelines. In the current one, he was only imprisoned for fraud; in the other, he was hanged for murder in 1968. Silver finds it odd that Kent was hanged in 1968 even though hanging was abolished in 1965. He produces the body's teeth, and Sapphire matches them with Kent's dental records in the prison files: the body in the yard was Kent's.

Kent is telling Marian how he got into fraud, starting small with bogus cheques when he was young, until he met a man called Tucker who had big ideas for a £30 million fraud. Kent became rich. He tells Marian he didn't kill the boy; they just made him think he did.

Steel's cellmate is taken from the cell by Jackson and a priest. They prepare Steel to be hanged.

In the present, Sapphire senses that Steel is becoming part of the past here. She realises he is about to be hanged in 1968. Silver needs a recording device to try to communicate with the past, so Sapphire hurries to fetch a tape recorder.

Kent tells Marian about how "they" came in the night, convinced he had murdered the boy. They made him believe he had done it, so much so that he can even see the boy's frightened face. He relives it in his mind, with the sound of a bottle being smashed.

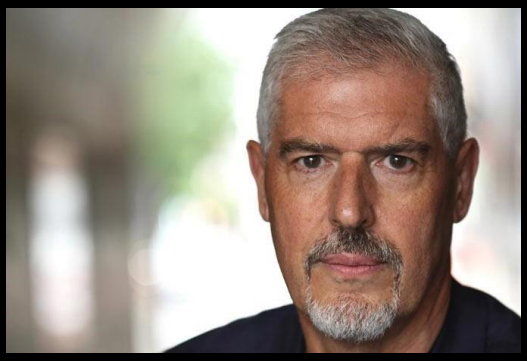
Silver has lashed up a device and connects it to the tape recorder. He switches it on and briefly speaks to Steel in the courtyard before the device cuts off. Sapphire says the time and place were both wrong, and it wasn't Steel. They realise that he's becoming Michael Kent.

In the hanging cell, Steel accuses Jackson of killing him so that Jackson will get his remaining years, but warns that Time never honours a deal. Jackson insists that Steel murdered his son. Steel contacts Sapphire to let her know that Jackson is the cause, but he's cut off as he's hanged.

Sapphire senses that Steel is trapped in the moment of hanging, but that wasn't the moment when time was fractured. They need to speak to Jackson.

Marian is talking to Hanmore when the timelines shift again. Sapphire and Silver realise that this is a new timeline, one in which Kent doesn't exist. Time is trying to confuse them.

GOVERNOR RICHARD HANMORE



AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Knowledge 2, Transport 2

TRAITS
Authority (Minor)
Emotional Complication (Minor) – Marital problems

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Sapphire and Silver find Jackson and ask him about the body in the courtyard. Distraught, Jackson talks about creatures which come at night. He doesn't understand how the elementals know about Kent. He says he can't leave here, as each time he gets to the gate, he can't move his legs. The creatures offered him a new life and he made a bargain with them, but he hates them. Jackson admits they made him murder his son, who he considered was weak, and frame Kent. That was the moment when time fractured.

Jackson says that Kent ruined his life by setting up a bogus company and emptying his bank account of its savings. It ruined Jackson's life and his marriage. He had a breakdown and got a job at the prison to make ends meet. Sapphire and Silver tell him they can turn back time and change things. They take him to the cell, in which Steel's hanging is replaying again and again.

Sapphire gets Jackson to concentrate on his house at the time when Marcus was murdered. She realises that Jackson was meant to kill his wife, not his son, which is what caused the fracture in time.

Sapphire and Silver go back corporeally. Marcus is hiding from his father, but Sapphire finds him and takes them both out of time. Jackson comes looking for Marcus and is confronted by his wife. In the ensuing row, Jackson kills her with a broken bottle.

In the prison files, Hanmore finds the record of Ian Jackson, who served fifteen years for the murder of his wife in 1967. He died of a heart attack while still in prison. There's no record of Marcus Jackson in the files.

Sapphire, Silver and Steel depart. In his office, Hanmore listens to the end of a concert by the London Symphony Orchestra, featuring lead cellist Marcus Jackson…

MICHAEL KENT

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Craft (Forgery) 4, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 3, Technology 2

TRAITS
Fragments (Major)
Imprisoned (Major) – If he escapes, this becomes **Wanted (Major)**

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

PRISON OFFICER IAN JACKSON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**4**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 1, Fighting 3, Survival 1

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Major) – The truth about the murder of his son
Tough

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

TRIGGERS

The murder of Marcus Jackson by his father and more particularly the framing of Michael Kent for the crime are the trigger for time being fractured at the prison.

Entities Ian Jackson only refers to as "creatures" made a bargain with him. If he killed his son, he would get a second chance at his life. The creatures were presumably Time and/or its agents.

IRREGULARITIES

The creatures that Ian Jackson talks about having done a deal with don't actually appear in the story. But Jackson has himself become an agent of Time. He lives in both of the linked time zones, 1967/68 and 2004. In both, he is a prison officer. The reality is that he is from the 1967/68 time zone, in which he killed his own son and framed Michael Kent. He is intent on administering "justice" to Kent by hanging him in his cell.

As in *The Lighthouse*, time is splintered, though not so badly this time. Nevertheless, the story jumps from 2004 to the 1960s and back again, and some scenes contain elements of both time zones (such as the Michael Kent of 2004 talking to Marian about the killing of Marcus Jackson, which took place in 1967).

MARIAN ANDERSON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Medicine 3 (AoE Psychology), Science 1

TRAITS
Empathic

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND SILVER)

Sapphire influences Governor Hanmore's mind to convince him that he doesn't need to check their security clearance with the prisons inspectorate. She also senses the date of B-Wing's last modification and uses telepathy to speak to Kent while he's unconscious.

Sapphire rolls time back to before Kilsby's death, which is well within the usual limits of her ability. Later though, she manages to take her and Silver back to 1967 to prevent the death of Marcus Jackson, which is well beyond them. It may have been possible because of

the fracturing of time linking 1967 and the present (2004).

Steel spends much of this story trapped in Michael Kent's body in 1967/68, in the timeline in which Kent was framed for killing Marcus Jackson.

Silver creates a device for communicating with the past, similar to the Graphophone from *All Fall Down*. At the end of the story, he admonishes Steel for lacking the human touch and not caring about the fate of the people involved in their assignments.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

Another Big Finish audio with an advisory warning, this time for themes related to suicide, domestic abuse, and child death and murder. Again, the GM should consider whether an assignment based on this story is suitable for their players.

Silver states that hanging was abolished in Britain in 1965. This isn't quite accurate. Hanging was suspended in 1965 but wasn't abolished until 1969 (though the last hangings took place in 1964 so it's a little academic).

Like the preceding audio, *The Lighthouse*, this is a story with multiple, overlapping and contradictory timelines, which the GM will need to keep close track of (and can use to confuse the players).

The nursery rhyme *Ding Dong Bell* is heard at various points in the story. It's initially sung by Stuart Kilsby in his cell but, as we learn, originally by Marcus Jackson to comfort himself. Unlike such rhymes in other *Sapphire & Steel* stories, it isn't a trigger but just a link to the boy's death. Marian Anderson mentions that the original lyrics dating from the late 16th Century were worse as the cat doesn't survive:

Jacke boy, ho boy newes,
The cat is in the well,
Let us ring now for her Knell,
Ding dong ding dong Bell.

It's unclear whether this earlier version is relevant to the plot.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Silver:** An elemental agent; specialist in all things technical. See *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* for Silver's stats.
- **Richard Hanmore:** Prison governor; under pressure and suffering from stress.
- **Ian Jackson:** Prison officer in both 1967 and 2004, and father of Marcus. Actually the real killer of Marcus who framed Michael Kent and entered into a deal with Time for a new life.
- **Michael Kent:** A new inmate in 2004, serving time for fraud. Also an inmate in 1967, convicted of the killing of Marcus Jackson.
- **Marian Anderson:** Prison counsellor. A sympathetic ear for the governor and convicts alike.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- In Britain, capital punishment was administered by means of hanging, until it was abolished in the 1960s. In other countries, other methods were and are used. Equipment such as an electric chair or guillotine could form a trigger for an assignment based around wrongful executions.

THE SCHOOL

ADVISORY WARNING

This story has a parental discretion advisory warning for references to underage sex and violence.

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in July 2006; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Two* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

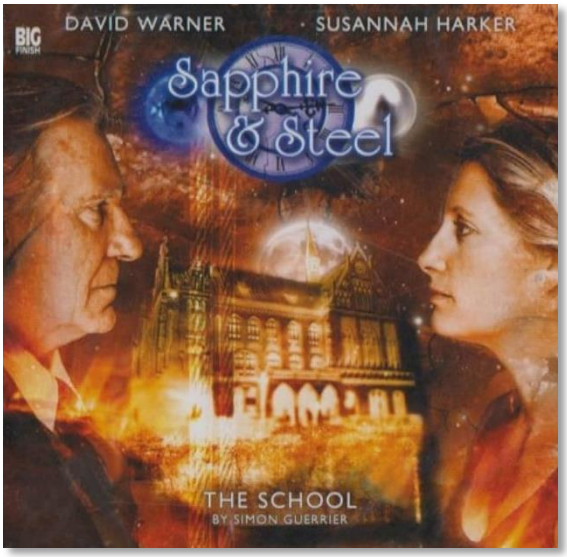
At an English public school, the bell rings for lessons but the children take no notice. They vanish, distressing the teacher, Chatura.

Sapphire and Steel arrive at the school. Sapphire's scan tells her there are 412 pupils aged 12-16, and twenty-three full-time staff of which seventeen are teachers. The balance is made up of teaching assistants and administrative staff, plus a kitchen run by an outside contractor. The elementals don't know what they're looking for yet. One of the teachers, Max Ireland, approaches and they introduce themselves as inspectors, here to look into a disturbance. Max takes them to the headmaster's office.

Chatura is with the headmaster, Mr Leslie, and is upset that she can no longer control the children. Max enters with Sapphire and Steel, and Mr Leslie offers to show them around with Max's assistance. The headmaster takes Sapphire to show her the new science wing, while Max gives Steel a tour. Chatura heads to Max's class to cover for him.

Max shows Steel the languages classrooms. The place is empty, but a recorded French lesson is still playing. They hear the sound of ghostly children, apparently from the walls.

During her tour, Sapphire also thinks she hears something. She is contacted by Steel, who tells



her he may have found something trying to break through.

Steel tries to communicate with the unseen children, but the sounds stop when Max turns the recorded lesson off at the wall, to Steel's annoyance.

In the science wing, Mr Leslie explains that he still teaches even though there's so little time. Under Sapphire's influence, he speaks openly, telling her that it's the aptitude of each child that is key, no matter how good the teachers.

Meanwhile, Chatura has lost control of Max's class, which descends into chaos until, once again, the children vanish.

Sapphire asks Mr Leslie about his wife, whom he has said also works at the school. But it seems an awkward topic for him to discuss, and he changes the subject.

Max continues Steel's tour, but he becomes flustered when the subject of some of the girls approaching adulthood comes up. Steel says it must make things difficult. They hear Chatura scream and rush to help, as do Sapphire and the headmaster. When they reach the

classroom, it's empty. Sapphire detects that the children are still here, in the walls, in the brickwork, so many voices. She tries to speak to them.

Steel hurries away in search of Chatura, and Mr Leslie rushes after him.

Sapphire hears a multitude of children's voices: a detention, plans for a séance, somebody's head being held down a toilet bowl. A girl nicknamed Pigsty is mentioned. Max remembers her, but says she died.

Mr Leslie tells Steel that the school is one hundred years old. Steel recognises this as a special moment in time. They find Chatura with a group of children preparing for the celebrations. Steel asks Chatura why she screamed, but she denies it at first. Steel grabs her to take her back to the class where Sapphire and Max are still listening to the ghostly voices. As Steel enters, there's a cry and the voices vanish.

Sapphire explains that there are feelings etched into the brickwork, but there's also something else. A whispering noise begins again. Steel dismisses all but Mr Leslie, whom he needs to help him make a stand.

Sapphire, Max and Chatura have retreated to another classroom. Sapphire has become unresponsive to the others, so Max goes back to fetch Steel and Mr Leslie, leaving Sapphire alone with Chatura. Chatura speaks to Sapphire as though she were a pupil, and Sapphire responds in a child's voice.

Steel wants to ensure that the force can't make a connection with them. He tells the headmaster not to take any notice of it; like a child, it will give up. Max arrives and screams as he's possessed by Pigsty and other children, and the whispering voices get louder. Steel is powerless to stop something from breaking through.

Sapphire says she wants to do finger-painting, but Chatura slaps her for misbehaving. She tells Sapphire that pain is how we learn what's right and what's wrong, and accuses Sapphire of parading herself before Max and Mr Leslie.

Steel tells Mr Leslie to focus his mind on something he believes in. He speaks of his pride in the school, reciting his speech written for the hundredth anniversary, and the voices recede. Max is free of their influence, but Steel says they won't be gone for long.

Chatura tells Sapphire she stinks of sex and sin. The whispering voices get louder as the teacher again hits Sapphire.

Steel realises Sapphire and Chatura are missing. He tells Max and Mr Leslie that the ghosts have found a weak spot. They are a psychic residue left by the school, layer upon layer, building up over the years into a critical mass. The whispering restarts and Steel has the headmaster recite his speech again. But this time, the voices don't recede.

Chatura is teaching Sapphire an apocryphal version of the story of St Peter and his beautiful daughter Petronilla. When Sapphire questions it, Chatura strikes her again.

Max is again threatened by the voices, but they are lured away by something else, by whatever Chatura is doing. Steel rushes away to find Sapphire and bursts in as the teacher is strangling her. Steel stops her and slaps

MR LESLIE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Fighting 1, Knowledge 4

TRAITS
Alien
Charming
Dark Secret (Major) – Harbours dark lusts
Dark Secret (Major) – Not real
Dependency (Major) – His entire existence is subject to Mrs Leslie maintaining it

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Sapphire to try to snap her out of being a child. Chatura runs off.

Steel explains that the voices represent a century of slights, bullying and punishments endured by the school's children. They're influencing the behaviour of everyone here and have taken the memory of a strict teacher they were terrified of and turned it into a monster. Max insists it's just a parody of someone, not a real teacher at all.

Elsewhere in the school, Chatura is attacked and killed by the voices, her body torn to pieces. Steel admits he sacrificed her to save the rest of them. The voices had already claimed her and made them her own.

MAX IRELAND

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Craft (Art) 3, Knowledge 2

TRAITS
Alien
Dark Secret (Major) – Harbours dark lusts
Dark Secret (Major) – Not real
Dependency (Major) – His entire existence is subject to Mrs Leslie maintaining it

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

Sapphire recovers, but she can still hear the voices and speaks like a teenager until Steel slaps her again. He asks the headmaster for something very old from the school. Max suggests that there are some nearby trees that are older than anything in the school itself. He takes Steel to show them to him and tells him bits of the school's history. Steel wonders what the trigger is. What is the children's motive? Max mentions some incidents of bullying, a suicide, drugs, all things that every school has to deal with at one time or another. But Steel thinks it's something in particular. They reach the exit door, but it's locked and even Steel can't break it open.

Mr Leslie is talking to Sapphire, and she notes that he refers to his wife in the past tense. He changes the subject. Sapphire contacts Steel to tell him that the headmaster is full of remorse. Mr Leslie asks Sapphire to tell him about her relationship with Steel, then goes to kiss her. Sapphire tries to break away but gives in to him as she becomes a teenager again.

Steel asks Max about Mrs Leslie. He becomes confused as he can't remember when he last

MRS LESLIE

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 1, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Hypnosis (Major) – see comments under Running the Assignment
Indomitable
Obligation (Major) – Time
Psychic
Psychic Assault – A successful contest of Presence + Resolve allows her to inflict damage equal to her Resolve (ignores Armour and similar)
Special – Time has given Mrs Leslie the ability to create, maintain and resurrect the school and its occupants as a physical reality based on its memories
Telepathy
Voice of Authority

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 8

saw her or what she looks like. Steel finds he isn't even able to smash a window to get out. He begins to wonder if Mr Leslie killed his wife or whether she killed herself, but finds he's unable to contact Sapphire.

Sapphire and Mr Leslie are still kissing when Steel and Max burst in. Steel flies into a rage and attacks the headmaster. He accuses Mr Leslie of killing his wife… until a strident voice speaks up, telling them she's perfectly fine…

CHATURA

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 3

TRAITS
Alien
Dependency (Major) – Her entire existence is subject to Mrs Leslie maintaining it
Dark Secret (Major) – Not real
Voice of Authority – Later gained with Mrs Leslie's influence

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

Once everyone has calmed down, Mrs Leslie admits that she knows the school is haunted, but the ghosts behave so long as they know who's boss. She has some kind of authority over them, making sure they know their place. They've been acting up recently, but it's just excitement over the hundredth anniversary. Mrs Leslie doesn't believe that the ghosts have taken Chatura and offers to take the elementals to see her.

Elsewhere in the school, the ghosts resurrect Chatura and she takes control of the class she was teaching.

Mrs Leslie explains that she doesn't actually work at the school. She and Steel arrive at the classroom and find Chatura to be fine. Steel contacts Sapphire to let her know, but neither of them trust Mrs Leslie. As Chatura's class continues, Steel speaks up when the children all stay quiet and don't respond to her questions. Chatura gives Steel a desk to sit at

while Mrs Leslie departs on other business.

Back in the headmaster's office, Sapphire comments that Mrs Leslie can control the ghosts, that there's a presence around her, something like a musk of death. She realises she can't hear Steel but falls asleep after drinking the tea that Mr Leslie prepared for her.

In Chatura's class, Steel joins in with the lesson to correct her on a point of grammar but gradually reverts to becoming one of the pupils as the teacher directs more and more questions at him.

Sapphire is muttering in her sleep as she dreams of the same lesson that Steel is trapped in. Max observes she's running a fever, but Mr Leslie distracts him. Mrs Leslie appears and Sapphire wakes just as the bell rings. Max goes off to teach Year 5, leaving Sapphire with the headmaster and his wife. Under questioning from Mr and Mrs Leslie, Sapphire says she likes it here. She'll fit right in!

Steel's lesson ends. He shakes Chatura's hand, noticing that she's freezing cold and has no pulse. On his way back to the headmaster's office, he bumps into Max, who is now behaving like a child and offers to show him a secret place.

Sapphire tells Mr and Mrs Leslie that she can feel the school trying to reshape them. But what's happening is too inconsistent; there are too many voices to take it in any one direction.

Steel and Max are in the boiler room, where Max reveals a grille in the wall that overlooks the girls' changing room. Steel communes with Sapphire until Mrs Leslie breaks into their telepathic conversation. Chaos erupts in both elementals' heads, and they both thrash around violently as if suffering from a seizure. Mrs Leslie stops her husband from helping Sapphire.

Max reverts to being an adult. As Steel recovers, he learns that Max's subject is art and asks him where his paint supplies are stored. They return to the headmaster's office to find Sapphire unconscious. When she comes round, she is again acting as a child. Steel also succumbs, becoming a child as Mr and Mrs Leslie exert their influence over him.

Sapphire and Steel head off to class. Later, Sapphire teases Steel for being lame when faced with Mr Leslie. He protests childishly but she continues chanting "*Steel is a lame-o!*"

Chatura is again killed by her class. Afterwards, Sapphire teases Steel that he has a bit of Chatura on his chin. Mrs Leslie appears and dismisses Steel. She tells Sapphire that she has a special task for her.

Chatura is resurrected again and recommences her class.

Max is conducting an art class with Steel as one of the pupils. Max explains about linear perspective and sets them to painting cones and spheres.

Elsewhere, Chatura is again killed by her class.

Mrs Leslie is instructing Sapphire on how to put up the decorations for the hundredth anniversary celebrations.

Chatura is again resurrected.

In the art lesson, Steel's attempt at a sphere is now much better. Max queries if Steel asked him about paints earlier.

Chatura is again killed. And resurrected. And killed. And resurrected. Repeatedly…

Sapphire has completed the decorations and boasts about her special responsibilities to Steel. Steel says it would be better if they just burned the whole school down, but then claims it was just a joke. He calls Sapphire lame.

SPECTRAL CHILD

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1

TRAITS
Alien
Dependency (Major) – Dependent on the school's continued existence
Fear Factor 2
Immaterial (Special Good) – Can become tangible at will
Impulsive
I**nvisible (Special Good)** – Can become visible if they need to
Possess
Psychic
Psychic Assault – As Mrs Leslie's trait

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

In the hall, Mrs Leslie speaks to the assembled pupils. She doesn't want anyone to spoil it for the others.

Steel is talking to Max about using the paints to blow the school up to make a statement. Max agrees that it would be a good surprise for Mr Leslie's birthday.

Mrs Leslie somehow learns of Steel's plan and incites the children against him and Max until Mr Leslie intervenes. He asks Sapphire what they should do with them, but she's confused.

Mr Leslie locates Max and attacks him. He then confronts Steel and forces him to say he was lying about destroying the school. Max pleads for a doctor, but Mrs Leslie just open up his head with the power of her mind, and Chatura uses Max's brain as part of a lesson until Mr Leslie's speech begins.

When Sapphire interrupts the headmaster's speech, Mrs Leslie strikes her and she suffers another apparent seizure. Their minds restored and in telepathic contact, Sapphire and Steel realise that Mr Leslie is drawing his strength from the children's memories. Sapphire wakes.

Steel takes the paint from the art room. Mr Leslie tries to force him to put it back, but his mental power is just a trick. Sapphire and Steel use their minds to detonate the paint, but the school is unaffected. Sapphire realises that it was never there to begin with as it failed an inspection. The elementals allow the children to learn the truth by turning them on Mr Leslie, but they then realise that he isn't real either.

Mrs Leslie confesses that the school was closed and demolished just days before its hundredth birthday. It had failed an inspection after Max Ireland was found to have been spying on the girls' changing room. Mr Leslie hadn't said a word and just pined away. His wife was never that bothered about the school's work, but she wanted a second chance. Mr Leslie, Chatura and Max admit they're not real people, just memories. Mrs Leslie brought them back to show that she had learned from her mistakes. They all dissipate apart from Mrs Leslie, who realises that the memory of her husband is not who he truly was and discovers that the site has been sold for a new development. Sapphire and Steel depart, leaving Mrs Leslie sobbing and broken.

TRIGGERS

The school's hundredth anniversary is part of the trigger, being a significant date in its history. However, it's not the full trigger, as there's also the psychic residue left by all sorts of injustice and pain experienced here over the years. Finally, Mrs Leslie's overpowering desire to recreate her husband and the school, and to make amends for her past indifference to both, has given Time an opportunity here.

IRREGULARITIES

It's not expressly stated but presumably Mrs Leslie has been offered a deal by Time for her husband and the entire school to be recreated in order that she can have a second chance. She regrets not being supportive of her husband with his work at the school and, in particular, after it was closed down, ultimately resulting in his death.

Mrs Leslie seems to have been given some powerful psychic abilities by Time. As well as maintaining the existence of the school, its staff and (to a certain extent) the pupils, she is able to influence Sapphire and Steel to regress them back to childhood. As the staff are her creations, Mrs Leslie is able to do anything to them, including killing and resurrecting them at will. The pupils, however, are more unruly, as they are partly created from the psychic residue of the school.

What Time gets out of this arrangement is unclear. Perhaps recreating the school will weaken history enough to allow it to break through (as in *The Passenger*), or perhaps this is all a trap for Sapphire and Steel.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

When Steel contacts Sapphire while in the boiler room peering into the girls' changing room, Sapphire responds with "*I don't know why I'm surprised. Ever since that thing with Jet!*" A relationship of some sort between Steel and Jet had previously been hinted at in *Assignment I*, when Lead told Steel that she sent her love.

Steel's remarkable strength isn't enough to break open the sealed doors or even smash the windows. This is because the school isn't real.

Sapphire uses her abilities to gain information about the school and the people in it, though she doesn't detect that all but Mrs Leslie are merely formed of memories.

Sapphire and Steel use their mental abilities to detonate the paint, presumably purchasing Telekinesis (or a similar trait) to do so.

Sapphire and Steel are both regressed to children in this story. As this is an audio, it's unclear whether they are physically transformed or merely mentally (but it's assumed not as their voices don't change pitch). Whenever they regress, they lose their elemental abilities.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The final story with a content warning from Big Finish, the GM will again need to be sure that it's suitable to run as an assignment for their players. There is also a fair amount of violence towards women, Sapphire and Chatura in particular. All told, it's an odd story that's not entirely in keeping with the TV series - Sapphire and Steel behaving like children is bizarre - but it has some potentially useful ideas.

Although Mrs Leslie can influence the school's staff and pupils as they aren't real, she cannot directly affect Sapphire and Steel, at least not physically, as they are. Instead, the main threat to the elementals is her Hypnosis trait, which she can use to regress them back to childhood. As already noted, it's unclear from the audio whether they are physically regressed, but this is presumably not the case. Anyone subjected to Mrs Leslie's Hypnosis has each of their Ingenuity, Presence and Resolve reduced by 2(1/2/3) points, depending on the level of

failure of their roll to resist it. Their behaviour also becomes that of a child. Without outside interference, a fresh roll to resist this can be made at the start of each subsequent scene, and if successful they return to normal.

Mrs Leslie's creations are not totally under her control. They have a certain amount of free will: the headmaster lusts after Sapphire; Max tries to help Steel; once she has been changed by the psychic memories of the school, Chatura is a bullying sadist; and the ghostly schoolchildren appear and disappear as they wish.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Mr Leslie:** The headmaster; proud of his school and what he has achieved. Eventually revealed to be merely his wife's memory of the original man, who pined away after the school failed an inspection and was closed down.
- **Max Ireland:** Young art teacher; recently demoted after getting a key question wrong during a school inspection. Eventually revealed to be a recreation of the original, who was discovered to have been spying on the girls' changing room.
- **Chatura:** English teacher, until recently unable to control her classes. Under Mrs Leslie's influence, has become strict and willing to impose physical punishment. Another recreation of the original person by Mrs Leslie.
- **Mrs Leslie:** The headmaster's wife; the only real person here, controlling everything and everyone else. Has entered into a deal with Time to recreate the school to give her a second chance with her husband.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The idea of something taking the form of a grotesque, sadistic schoolteacher brought to life by negative emotions is a strong one that could be used more centrally within an assignment.

THE SUREST POISON

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in September 2006; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Two* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

In 2006, an antique pocket watch, the Duc de Praslin Grande Complication by Breguet of Paris, is being auctioned. Breguet is considered the Leonardo da Vinci of watchmakers, and the bidding concludes at £350,000. Time distorts as the auctioneer's hammer falls.

Sapphire and Steel arrive while the auctioneer, Stuart Webb, is still chatting to his clients. They don't yet know why they're here. Sapphire can sense something: not Time but similar. Something far less defined than some of the irregularities they face. There's something that has caused a disturbance in linear time. She senses at least two layers of different yet connected things or people.

Webb approaches Sapphire and Steel, and they pose as a wealthy collector and his assistant. He assumes they were attracted here by the Duc de Praslin Grande Complication. Webb tells them that Breguet only make two pieces like it but one was stolen, leaving only the lesser piece that has just been auctioned. The other, the Marie-Antoinette Grande Complication, was stolen in Jerusalem some twenty-five years ago and has never been seen again.

Sapphire senses that Webb has more than an emotional attachment to his collection of watches and telepathically tells Steel that he's one of the layers she sensed earlier. Webb is cagey as to why he was selling them, merely saying that a man has to live. He goes to secure the watches away.

Sapphire tells Steel that Webb was born on 21st

April, 1850, making him 156 years old. They leave for the time being.

In 1780, Abraham-Louis Breguet brings home a bunch of lilies for his dying wife, Cécile Marie-Louise L'Huillier. Becoming emotional, he blames God and time for taking his wife so prematurely.

Back in 2006, Sapphire and Steel return to Webb's closed shop, somehow bypassing its security. Webb is annoyed, but Steel tells him they know how old he is, though he is still a mortal man. The elementals say he needs their help. Webb admits that the watches have prolonged his life. At first, he thought it was a blessing, but it became a curse. Webb is world weary, almost despondent, as he has outlived his children and grandchildren. Now, he has no contact with his great grandchildren, or indeed anyone.

Steel tells him he has been affected, maybe infected, by time. Webb says he was working for scientific writer David Salomons about a century ago when he became interested in watches. Salomons was a collector of fine timepieces. His collection included the Marie-Antoinette that was stolen from the LA Mayer Museum of Islamic Arts in Jerusalem in 1983,

but it is just the Duc de Praslin watch that has affected Webb and he has always carried it. The others are also special in some way, seeming to be alive when together, which is why he is breaking up his collection.

Steel asks to see the Duc de Praslin and the other watches, but Webb refuses. Sapphire uses her powers to learn of Webb's safe and its lock, which is controlled by a 4-digit PIN. Steel guesses correctly that the code is 1850, the year of Breguet's birth, and the safe opens.

In 1780, Breguet sobs uncontrollably as his late wife is buried. He determines to immerse himself in his work and make himself the master of time, not its fool.

Webb shows the elementals the Duc de Praslin Grande Complication. Sapphire reads it and learns that its components were made between 1780 and 1806. Webb confirms that it took Breguet years to complete it. A faint echo of a voice emanates from the watch, something which Webb has never heard before. Steel gets him to open the watch and there is an echoing cry.

In 1783, Breguet is commissioned to make a watch for Marie Antoinette which contains all known complications (functions) and made mainly of gold. There is no restriction on the price or the amount of time needed. Breguet sees it as an opportunity to advance the art of watchmaking, to enable him to master time.

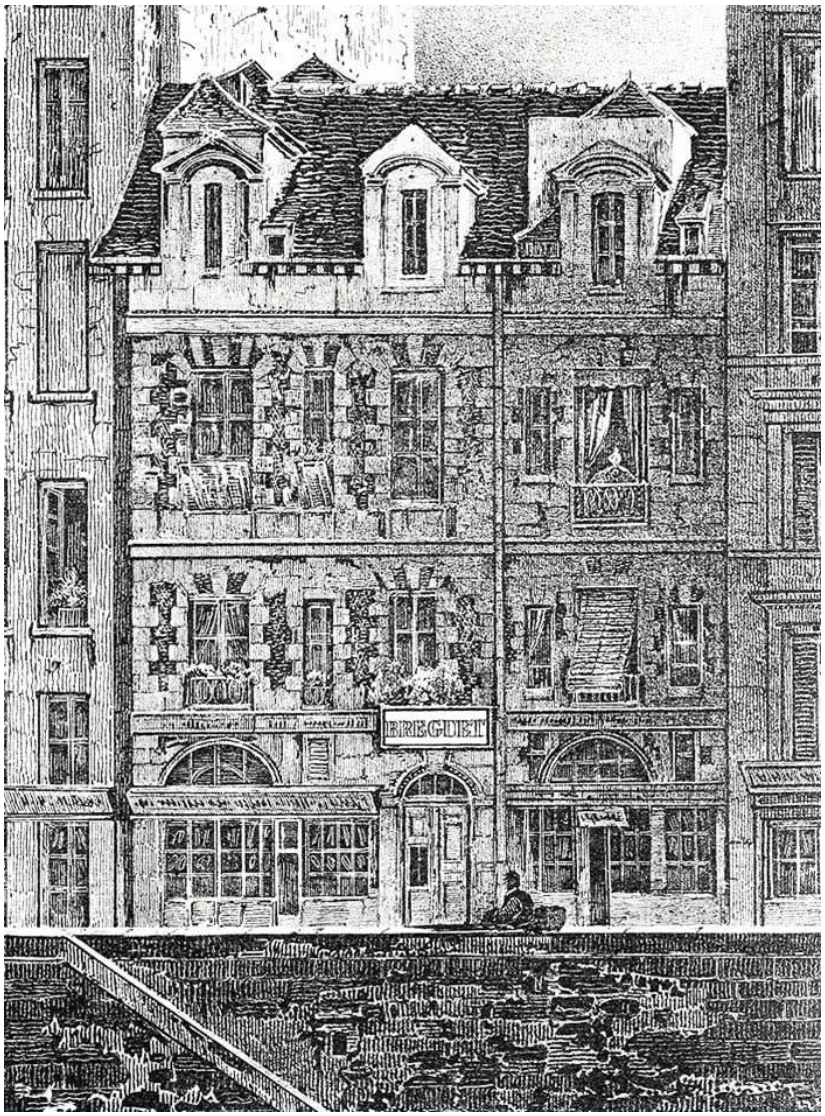
Hearing the echo, Sapphire thinks the breakthrough took place in the past. Steel tells Webb about the entities trying to break through and gets him to open another watch, with no result. But when Sapphire holds it, she detects that it contains elements of time, trapped like insects in amber. Steel starts to check the other watches while Webb tells them about the Marie-Antoinette. They experience a localised time distortion before things return to normal. Webb noticed nothing. He explains that Breguet had an intimate understanding of time, leaving Sapphire to suspect that he is the cause, perhaps creating a critical mass allowing time to break through.

The Duc de Praslin Grande Complication has the greatest residual power of those in Webb's collection, so Sapphire can use it to take her and Steel back to the 18th Century to meet Breguet. They go back to Paris in 1783, the year in which Breguet started work on the Marie-Antoinette. As they travel, Sapphire can feel Time's influence, confirming it has something to do with the watches. When they arrive, she alters their clothing to something more suitable. They are in Breguet's office, where they meet his assistant, Gerard DuBourg. Gerard goes to fetch his employer.

Sapphire can sense Time already here, but obscured. There's something else, little fissures like pins in a pincushion, caused by the watch mechanisms. Gerard returns and apologises that his master is working but will see them presently. They agree to wait, but when Gerard leaves, Sapphire detects Breguet in his workshop and they go to see him.

Breguet is working feverishly and muttering to an unseen presence. Sapphire senses that he is very sad, but his grief is dulled by his work. She believes that the invisible presence is his late wife Cécile, but she's not a ghost. Cécile encourages Breguet on, telling him that they will soon be reunited. Suddenly, Cécile notices the elementals and attacks them, throwing them forwards through time to Jerusalem in 1983. Without a watch, they are trapped here! Sapphire feels weakened. Steel remembers that this is the time and place of the theft of the Marie-Antoinette watch, and Sapphire senses that it is in the LA Mayer Museum of Islamic Arts nearby.

Breguet is working late into the night on an anti-shock device for the Marie-Antoinette. Cécile encourages him on.



In 1983, Sapphire has examined all the watches in the museum and determines that none of them will exist in 2006, so they can't travel to the future. But they could use one of the watches to return to 1790, where they can use others of Breguet's watches to get back to 2006. Sapphire identifies a suitable watch from the museum's display and they travel back to Breguet's workshop in 1790. There, they find the Duc de Praslin again, which has the required residual energy.

Sapphire and Steel arrive back in Webb's shop in 2006 and tell him about the ghost, possibly that of Cécile, that flung them through time. Webb tells them more about the theft in 1983, the details of which are largely a matter of speculation. Steel asks him why someone would destroy the watches. Webb realises that they suspect him and hotly denies he was the thief.

Sapphire talks to Webb alone. Webb tells her that his grandson Michael first suggested to him that he should destroy the watches in his collection to rid himself of his curse. He tells her of the family members he has lost over the years. Only Michael knew his grandfather's true age and of his suffering, but he died in 1985. Once the collection is sold, he intends to spend the rest of his years in solitude, but Sapphire suggests he might instead make contact with his family again. Webb agrees that the watches must be destroyed.

Sapphire and Steel discuss the possibility that Breguet created the watches deliberately with the intention that they could be used to travel in time, and that they

have been augmented by the presence that has taken Cécile's form. But only those who are time sensitive could know that they have this ability, which is why they have remained unused.

The elementals return to Webb, and Sapphire asks him about a particular watch in his collection, one without any residual energy. Webb explains that it's because it was created by Gerard DuBourg, not Breguet himself. It was also Gerard who completed the Marie-Antoinette after Breguet's death.

When Sapphire tries to return to 1783 with Steel, she finds the way is blocked by some force, presumably the presence in Breguet's workshop. Steel asks why they went to 1790 previously. Webb tells them it's the year Breguet invented the *para-chute*, an anti-shock device for watches. Sapphire speculates that perhaps Breguet wasn't the genius he's remembered as, and that there are only moments of inspiration when the presence influences him. Sapphire might be able to focus on one of those moments rather than the wider time-frame and specifically travel to those moments.

Gerard shows Sapphire and Steel into Breguet's workshop several years after their previous visit. They ask Breguet about the Marie-Antoinette, which he is still working on even though the Queen is now dead. Breguet falls into a reverie as Time breaks through. In a trance, Breguet tells them that Time wants control so that he can save his wife. The presence resembling Cécile again attacks, removing Steel from the workshop and outside time as he was interfering with Breguet's work.

Sapphire revives Breguet and tells him he is being used. She says that the presence is not Cécile, and that it will not uphold its end of the bargain. He insists it wants him to create watches so he can go back and prevent Cécile's death. But Sapphire tells him that he will be unable to use them.

Sapphire and Steel are expelled back to 2006 by the presence. Sapphire believes that the watches are sleepers that are being prepared for when the time is right.

The elementals arrive back in Webb's shop, where he is contacting his clients to tell them the sale of his collection is off. Sapphire and Steel ask him when Breguet's next invention was made. Webb tells them that Breguet's next development was the *tourbillon* (whirlwind) in 1795, a device for compensating for the effects of gravity.

Sapphire and Steel travel back to 1795 and again visit Breguet's office, where they are met by Gerard. France is now in the grip of the Reign of Terror. Breguet himself has been in exile and has only recently returned from Switzerland. Before Gerard can inform Breguet of their arrival, Sapphire places him in a deep sleep. She detects only six watches still here, and that Breguet is currently in a trance while Time uses him to develop more inventions. Steel goes through to the workshop, while Sapphire wakes Gerard to ask him about his

employer. She asks him about the ghost of Cécile. He has seen her only once, in 1790, when Breguet was working on the *para-chute*. Others have also seen her every now and then, but she never bothers them.

Steel enters Breguet's workshop. He tries to convince Breguet that the presence isn't his late wife. Steel tells him he can't save Cécile, but he can save other lives. He demands to know what the watch is for. Breguet tells him the *tourbillon* will enable it to make very precise time measurements, but admits that its true purpose is to provide control. Breguet now longs for death.

In the office, the presence appears before Sapphire. It says it doesn't fully exist as it should yet. It again attacks Sapphire, who calls for Steel's help. He threatens to destroy the *tourbillon* and kill Breguet if the presence doesn't release Sapphire.

Sapphire finds herself back in Jerusalem in 1983, while Steel has been taken out of time where the presence says it will use him as its new plaything. It begins by torturing him.

Sapphire is again feeling weak. She finds that Webb is also in Jerusalem, having been able to travel in time using the Duc de Praslin watch. She wonders why the presence was unable to throw her any further forward than 1983.

Gerard is concerned about his employer's health and that he's working too hard. Breguet recalls that Sapphire told him that he's being driven by a malevolent force. But Time intervenes to turn Breguet against Gerard and he orders his assistant out.

Webb is overjoyed to be in Jerusalem in 1983. Sapphire tells him about the watches being used as temporal seeds, waiting to be activated. But she can't see the full picture to understand what the final objective is. They decide to head to the museum.

Breguet has collapsed and is woken by Cécile. She forces him back to work on the watches. The work must continue!

Webb says that Breguet died in 1823 of natural causes. The year before he died, he was working on a device to split time into tenths and even hundredths of seconds.

In 1822, the presence drives Breguet to complete his work. The work is all!

The Jerusalem museum isn't open yet. Sapphire is still feeling weak and believes the Grande Complication she is carrying to be the cause. She takes time forward by about a quarter of an hour, by which time the theft of the watches has taken place. She senses that in fact the watches do not exist any more.

In 1822, Breguet has completed the split-timing mechanism. He realises that his work is driven by what the presence wants, and that it is not his wife. But the presence taunts him that he is its plaything. Breguet threatens to

STUART WEBB

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 4 (AoE: Horology), Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Feel the Turn of the Universe – Prolonged exposure to temporal energy has given Webb a greater sensitivity
Immortal (Major) – Only while he still owns the Duc de Praslin watch
Wealthy (Minor)

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

close the business, but he cannot do anything the presence doesn't want him to. It will press the human race on to become ever more obsessed with timekeeping, until it becomes a slave to time. The presence says it will keep him alive far beyond his natural span to carry out its plan, so that its brethren will be able to break through whenever they want and Time will control everything!

Sapphire detects no sensation of Time being here. In fact, there are no Breguet watches here apart from the Grande Complication she is carrying. She wonders what will happen to the residual time traces in the watches in

"CÉCILE"

AWARENESS	**6**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 5, Technology 5

TRAITS
Alien
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Immaterial – But can become tangible
Invisible (Special Good)
Psychic
Shapeshift (Special) – It has taken the form of Cécile, but can presumably assume other likenesses if needed
Special – Out of Time! With a successful contest of Presence + Resolve, the entity can remove a character from reality, making them immaterial, invisible and completely within its power

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 10

Webb's collection when they are destroyed in 2006.

In 1823, Breguet completes another component. The presence and Steel are both also here. It has kept Steel alive for almost thirty years with the intention of using him as Breguet's replacement, as the watchmaker's body is failing.

In 1983, Sapphire teleports herself and Webb to within the museum before the theft. She tries to open a display case, but the residual time disruption from the watches inside is too strong for her. Webb opens it for her, and temporal energy rushes out, and the watches all vanish. The museum's alarms sound as

ABRAHAM-LOUIS BREGUET

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Craft (Clock- & Watchmaking) 6, Knowledge 4 (AoE: Horology), Science 3, Technology 5 (AoE: Clockwork)

TRAITS
Obsession (Major) – Prevent his wife's death
Passionate Love

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 6

Sapphire takes herself and Webb back to Paris on the day of Breguet's death in 1823.

Sapphire and Webb arrive at Breguet's workshop. The presence finally lets Breguet rest, while Sapphire tells Steel about the destruction of the watches.

As Breguet's strength fades, so does that of the presence, which wails in agony. Sapphire tells Breguet that he can resist her. The presence has made the mistake by leaving elements of time within the watches it had Breguet make. Breguet gives Sapphire the Marie-Antoinette, which she opens to release the residual energy within it. As it dissipates, the presence vanishes.

Gerard enters the workshop to find Breguet dying. Webb tells his assistant he must finish the Marie-Antoinette after his master's death. Sapphire and Steel know that Time will now not be able to complete its plan, as the watch will be finished with pure human intellect, not the help of Time.

Back in 2006, Sapphire and Steel have destroyed the remaining watches in Webb's collection. Now he can live out the rest of his life naturally. Though perhaps he's relishing the prospect of death.

TRIGGERS

Breguet's grief over the death of his wife Cécile at a young age is the key that allows an agent of Time to break through and manipulate him.

The timepieces Breguet creates from 1780 until his death all contain a residual amount of temporal energy and may be considered triggers in their own right.

IRREGULARITIES

The ghostly presence that takes the form of Cécile is an agent of Time. It isn't able to manipulate time directly, but this isn't

GERARD DUBOURG

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Craft (Clock- & Watchmaking) 5, Knowledge 1

TRAITS
Obligation (Major) – His employer
Well Mannered

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 2

TIME-ACTIVE BREGUET WATCH
(Special Gadget)

Traits: Vortex, Restrictions – Can only be used by a character who has Feel the Turn of the Universe; can only travel between the dates of its existence
Story Points: 4

Breguet's time-active watches are those he commenced work on after the death of his wife in 1780 and completed prior to his own death on September 17th, 1823 (unless extended by "Cécile"). Any completed by others after his death are not time active.

Due to the actions of Sapphire and Stuart Webb, many of the time-active watches cease to exist on the date of the supposed robbery of the Breguet collection from the LA Mayer Museum of Islamic Arts in Jerusalem on April 15th, 1983. The remainder survive in Webb's collection until 2006, when Sapphire and Steel destroy them.

The dates of their creation and destruction are the end points of their ability to travel in time. No watches are able to travel before 1783 or after 2006.

The Duc de Praslin Grande Complication: This watch contains the most residual time energy. In addition to having the above traits, prolonged exposure grants a character **Feel the Turn of the Universe** and **Immortality (Major)** for the period that they remain in close contact with it. The Duc de Praslin costs **6 Story Points** instead of 4.

uncommon with Time's agents; the faceless Shape in *Assignment IV*, for example, had power over photographs, not time. Sapphire sensed it to be not Time but something similar, though something far less defined than the transient beings of *Assignment VI*. Incidentally, this is the first mention of the transients in the audios, a foreshadowing of things to come…

Despite its lack of control over time, the entity can imbue the watches that Breguet creates with residual temporal energy, which has the effect of making them into time machines.

Anyone with Feel the Turn of the Universe can sense something unusual about them, even hearing an echoing voice if a watch is opened.

The entity's plan is to enslave humans to Time by making them more and more dependent on it. The advances that Breguet makes in the measurement of time will tie mankind down until it becomes Time's slaves.

Although trapped in linear time, the entity can remove characters from time and imprison them in its own extra-temporal realm, where it can do with them whatever it wishes. It can also use Breguet's time-active watches to send others through time against their will.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire senses something when the elementals first arrive, but it's too ill defined for her to recognise. She is, however, able to determine the birth date of Stuart Webb.

Sapphire and Steel tell Webb that they are from a higher power. When Webb asks if they

are the police, Steel merely says that they're investigators.

Sapphire and Steel are able to travel back to 1783 in this story, but only because of the residual effects of time on the time-active watch. Without such a watch, they become trapped in 1983.

Steel is a captive of the entity for almost thirty years, between 1795 and 1823. He doesn't seem to suffer any long term damage from the experience, and there's no indication that thirty years is meaningful in the extended lifespans of the elementals.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

The story's title is taken from a quotation by 19th Century American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson: "*Tobacco, coffee, alcohol, hashish, prussic acid, strychnine, are weak dilutions: the surest poison is time*." Webb paraphrases it at the end of the story.

Abraham-Louis Breguet, his wife Cécile and the watches mentioned in the story are all real, as was the theft of the Marie-Antoinette piece (as part of a much larger haul of timepieces) in Jerusalem in 1983. As luck would have it, the culprit was identified by the police a month before the audio was released, and most of the watches were recovered by the end of 2008. Gerard DuBourg, however, is fictional.

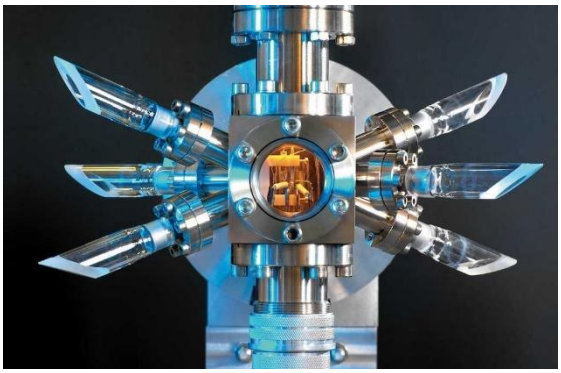
In *Sapphire & Steel* terms, this is a globetrotting adventure. Starting off in England (probably London) in 2006, the pair visit Paris at various times from 1783 to 1823, and Jerusalem in 1983. The audio format doesn't really make the most of these locations though, but a GM could emphasise the local differences. The original script included a subplot involving Stuart Webb in 18th Century Paris. This was removed prior to recording to avoid over-complicating the story, but the GM could add something along these lines – perhaps requiring the elementals to locate and rescue him - to provide a further challenge.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Stuart Webb:** Watch collector born in 1850 but still alive in 2006; cursed with immortality, he is tired of life.
- **Abraham-Louis Breguet:** 18th Century French watchmaker. Driven by grief (and an agent of Time) to design and invent ever more sophisticated timepieces.
- **Cécile Marie-Louise L'Huillier:** Wife of Breguet. The real Cécile dies near the start of the story, but her form is taken by an agent of Time that uses Breguet.
- **Gerard DuBourg:** Breguet's assistant and a master watchmaker in his own right. Loyal to his employer.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- The entity drove Breguet to achieve greater accuracy of time in his timepieces, in order that Time could become the master of the human race. In the modern day, atomic clocks are accurate to within one three hundred millionths of a second per year, with International Atomic Time being kept by over 450 atomic clocks across the world. Surely such clocks are an ideal means for Time to break into our reality?

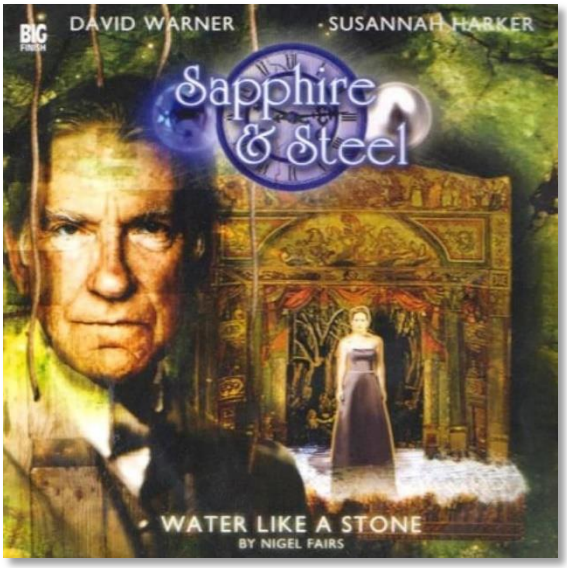


WATER LIKE A STONE

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in November 2006; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Two* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS



At the old Capital Palace Theatre near London on Christmas Eve 2006, the manager Arthur Bunnings hears breaking glass. The stage piano starts playing, and Arthur sees a figure he thinks is his father…

In the graveyard outside, Sapphire reads a headstone: "LOUISA ANNE TEDDINGLEY. LOST TO US IN 1824. HER LOVE SURVIVES." She notes that nobody has been buried here since 1870, but Steel doesn't understand the custom of burying the dead. In any case, it's the theatre they're heading for. The Capital Palace, built in 1903, is more or less derelict now.

Arthur is on the phone, asking about the theatre's lights, which should have been fixed by now. When he resets the main switch, they come on. Arthur again hears the piano and this time encounters someone he takes to be Mrs Darwin.

Outside, Sapphire and Steel hear the sound of an audience laughing. Heading inside, Sapphire reads a poster for *The Abandoned Lady*, a play about the *Marie Celeste*. They change their clothes into something more appropriate and head for the royal box. But once inside, they find the place empty. Arthur appears and assumes they're here for the rehearsal. Sapphire telepathically tells Steel that he's corporeal, he's 47 and he's hiding something. Arthur asks which of them will be singing, to which Sapphire replies that it's definitely Steel!

Arthur explains that there was a church here once. His father loved this theatre; it was the only one that would put on his plays towards the end. Steel goes to have a look around, leaving Sapphire with Arthur. One of his father's plays was *The Abandoned Lady*, and Arthur produces the final draft, which is full of corrections and major rewrites in an ornate hand not his father's. The concert is a kind of memorial service for him as he disappeared on January 3rd, 1987, abandoning his family.

On stage, Steel encounters somebody playing the piano and recognises it to be Ruby, one of his fellow elementals.

Sapphire asks for more information on *The Abandoned Lady*. Arthur says it's a load of old rubbish really, with people materialising from out of nowhere in the middle of the Atlantic and claiming to work for a higher power! It's absurd, but the punters loved it and it was his father's only real success. It was first put on in this theatre.

A bell begins tolling somewhere nearby, but Arthur says the nearest church is probably in Feltham, fifteen or twenty miles away. He and Sapphire go to investigate.

Ruby is an expert on music and comments on the bell's timbre, but she despairs when Steel

says it's just a bell. Sapphire and Arthur appear and it's clear that Arthur knows Ruby as Mrs Darwin. The bell is tolling somewhere up in the Circle, which Steel breaks into. There's a hubbub of voices beyond the door.

Back downstairs, Sapphire tells Ruby that the church that predated the theatre was here until St Valentine's Day 1889. But this doesn't explain why nobody was buried in the graveyard after 1870. Arthur explains that it was full following a terrible flood.

Steel contacts Sapphire. The voices don't want him to go into the Circle. Then they change, becoming terrified.

Arthur explains that the church's congregation all drowned when a lake on Morlington Hill burst its dam on Christmas Eve 1870. According to the history books, it wasn't even raining. Sapphire goes to assist Steel. Ruby sits at the piano and plays Holst's music for *In the Bleak Midwinter* while Arthur sings. Steel returns, and they realise that Sapphire has disappeared. Ruby can't sense her and says that she's gone somewhere into the past.

Sapphire encounters Arthur, but he now seems to be called Pip. She uses her powers to detect that it's now Christmas Eve 1914, but something is wrong. Ruby is also here but believes herself to be Miss Havisham. They are characters from Dickens' *Great Expectations*, with Sapphire in the role of Estella. Sapphire finds herself forced to play the role assigned to her, and her clothes change into character. She tries to contact Steel, but realises she can't reach him.

In the church in 1871, Arthur is in the guise of the vicar and is performing the funeral service for the flood victims. Overcome with grief, he comes to a halt, and an unseen theatre audience begins chanting "*Why are we waiting?*"

In 2006, Ruby is chanting the same. She tells Steel she got as far back as Christmas Eve 1973 but hasn't been able to locate Sapphire. She tries to go further back but is interrupted when Arthur sees his father on the stage again. He is incredulous but Ruby tells him she's psychic and the vision of his father was from 1963. Ruby says she usually works alone and nobody has ever shared her visions before. She tells him the secret is in the music and begins playing the piano without even touching the keys. She explains that music binds the threads of time together. It's immortal and reaches out

across the centuries, connecting both past and future.

Arthur says he's never had visions before. His mother told him he had a vivid imagination as a boy, which he got from his father's side of the family. Steel becomes impatient and instructs them to get on with it.

Sapphire notices that the clocks have all stopped at midnight. Ruby and Arthur carry on their enforced performance as Miss Havisham and Pip, when Steel unexpectedly enters.

Back in 2006, Ruby is now singing *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*. Arthur notices it has become cold. He sees a vision of a man who's been waiting for someone outside the church for ages. Ruby tells him it's 1824. Steel asks if Sapphire is there, but she's not. He tells them to go further back.

The Steel in the *Great Expectations* scenario can't hear Sapphire's telepathy. He is in the role of Mr Pocket, and he, Pip and Miss Havisham carry on with their performance.

Ruby has now taken time to 1938, which Arthur queries, as she was supposed to be taking them further back from 1824. Steel impatiently informs him that time isn't linear! Arthur can see so many people, but he doesn't know if any are Sapphire. Ruby returns her focus to 2006, but now Steel has vanished.

In 1871, Arthur as the vicar is praying in the church. Steel enters and demands to know who he is and the date.

Sapphire tries to break through the Miss Havisham persona to Ruby, but she just continues reciting her lines. Arthur as Pip tries to stop Sapphire, whom he believes is Estella despite Sapphire's denial. Suddenly, she is in contact with Ruby's mind. But Ruby is angry and seems to be possessed, claiming that she was abandoned on the happiest day of her life. She says she stopped the clocks and froze time for him, and that she's jealous of the way they admire, love and lust for Sapphire. Sapphire is Ruby's plaything and weapon, and she can make them all suffer for what they have done!

In 1871, Steel discovers that outside the church is just blackness. The vicar tells him that his wife and son both died in the flood on Christmas Eve. He suffers from despair and has lost his faith, even though he must still preach to his congregation on Sundays. Sapphire enters but doesn't speak.

In 2006, Arthur thinks it's his fault that Ruby has failed to find Sapphire, as she said she normally does this sort of thing on her own. He says the concert in memory of his father is like opening an old wound, almost an enjoyable pain of loss and guilt.

In the church in 1871, Sapphire remains silent. The vicar babbles on about his loss until Steel tells him to shut up. The sound of an audience laughing can be heard. A congregation arrives.

Arthur says he blames himself for his father's disappearance. He'd left the family once before, when Arthur was little, and blamed Arthur for it when he returned. He wasn't a happy man in real life, but he came alive on the stage as an amateur actor. He was never proud of Arthur or said he loved him, and neither did his mother. Arthur says that he too has dark moments, more than light ones. He can never believe anyone who tells him they love him.

When Ruby tells Arthur she has no parents, he realises that she and Sapphire and Steel are not

ARTHUR BUNNINGS

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 2

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – His father's disappearance
Psychic – But doesn't realise it
Psychometry - Ditto

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

human. She makes him stare into her eyes, and he realises they're not aliens or angels, but something like a sound heard in dreams. He can't quite understand what they are.

They are interrupted by the sound of rushing water. Through the window, Arthur sees a clear sky even though rain is pouring through the roof.

Steel is still trapped in the church in 1871 with Sapphire seemingly in a trance. Ruby manages to contact him, but they are cut off. Again, there is the sound of rushing water building to a roar.

In the *Great Expectations* scenario, Arthur is continuing to act out his role as Pip. Sapphire shouts at them to stop and hears the sound of an audience laughing. She collapses, and Miss Havisham pronounces her dead.

In 1871, the vicar is praying again but struggling with his faith. Sapphire revives just as the flood engulfs the church.

Entering the *Great Expectations* scenario, Steel discovers Ruby as Miss Havisham. He realises that she isn't Ruby, but something which has taken her form. Estella is also present, but although she appears to be Sapphire, she no longer has her personality.

Sapphire finds herself in another scenario, that of *Cinderella*, with herself in the title role.

Elsewhere, in the music hall heyday of the theatre, a performer, Dolly, sings a song about being left in the lurch on her wedding day. The audience cheers and applauds her on. Different verses are heard numerous times between subsequent scenes.

Back in 2006, Arthur realises the rain pouring inside the theatre is actually just the sprinkler system and turns it off.

In *Cinderella*, Sapphire as Cinders is presented to Prince Charming at his Grand Ball.

Ruby manages to contact Steel who tells her he's trapped in the church in 1871. She and Arthur realise it's warm there, impossible for an English church on Christmas Eve. Ruby asks Arthur whether there are records of what plays were performed in the theatre, and they head off to the manager's office to check.

In *Great Expectations*, Steel demands to know the year. When Miss Havisham refuses to say, he smashes the table in anger.

Ruby and Arthur are looking through the theatre's records. They find that an adaptation of *Great Expectations* called *The Pride of Miss Havisham* was put on in December 1914. There are also records of other plays, including

Cinderella, The Darkest Room, Private Lives and *The Abandoned Lady*. Ruby finds records of a play called *The Flood*, which was put on in December 1962 and told the true story of the disaster of 1870. She realises that Sapphire and Steel are trapped inside the play.

In *Cinderella*, Cinders is struggling to remain dignified at the Prince's Ball, to the audience's laughter. Midnight strikes and she flees.

Ruby is now trying to find the script for *The Flood* to understand what is happening to the other elementals and get them out. She suddenly hears from Sapphire, who tells her where she is. Arthur hears a song being sung, which he recognises as from *Cinderella*. The song ends as he finds the script.

In *Cinderella*, Steel appears as Cinders' father, while Sapphire as Cinders scrubs the floor.

The script of *Cinderella* changes as Arthur reads it. Ruby is concerned that this means that Sapphire and Steel are changing the story as they become more and more part of it, making it more difficult to extract them.

In *Great Expectations*, Steel starts one of Miss Havisham's stopped clocks, but it achieves nothing. Ruby contacts him to tell him what she has learned, but they are cut off.

In the real world, Arthur reads in the script that the audience becomes restless as Cinderella doesn't sing when expected. One member of the audience produces a submachine gun and fires it.

Ruby confesses that this may be all her fault. She was so intent on impressing Steel with her piano trick that she accidentally opened up a fissure between fantasy and reality, and Sapphire and Steel fell through it. The fissure has become unstable and they are becoming mortal characters.

In the script of *Cinderella*, Cinders is mown down by the spray of bullets and falls. Ruby says she has killed Sapphire! Arthur replies that if Ruby caused all this, she can resolve it. But Ruby doesn't know how she created the fissure. She has no choice but to close it, abandoning Sapphire and Steel to their fates.

In the 1871 of *The Flood*, the vicar is sobbing while he prays again. Steel enters but Bunnings points out that the light of life has left the eyes of his wife, played by Sapphire… until she shocks them by speaking.

In *Great Expectations*, Steel suggests a sing-song, something festive. Although Miss Havisham objects, Pip starts singing *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*. In the midst of this, Ruby contacts Steel to tell him what she intends to do, and they are joined by Sapphire's voice. Sapphire has realised that each time she has died, she has moved to one of the other scenarios. This must be the way out!

But Steel argues that something else must be preventing them from getting back to the real world. They recall hearing brief snatches of a theatre audience cheering and clapping. But before they can work out what this means, Miss Havisham angrily interrupts. She has had

LOUISA TEDDINGLEY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**N/A**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Craft (Singing) 2, Subterfuge 3

TRAITS
Fear Factor 1
Immunity - All physical damage
Immaterial
Invisible (Special Bad)
Passionate Love - Henry
Possess
Psychic
Special – Has an affinity with water, over which she has considerable ability to manifest and control, creating rain storms or floods for example

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 6

enough and rants on while Steel feeds humorous lines, to the unseen audience's laughter.

In *The Flood*, the vicar's prayers are interrupted by Sapphire reciting a limerick, again to the audience's laughter, overlaid by the sounds of the rushing water and screams.

Dolly's song is finally interrupted by Steel, again to the sound of laughter.

Sapphire and Steel appear back in the present, but Steel doubts that they are safe yet. There was a time distortion before Ruby's musical trick. Sapphire sensed something trying to communicate. Ruby suspects it is whoever rewrote Arthur's father's plays. Water is a common theme to them, as is abandonment in the forms of Miss Havisham, Cinderella and the *Marie Celeste*. There seems to be enough anger to have caused the flood of 1870.

Sapphire takes her mind back to see the phantom audience. She notices a particular woman always present, never singing or smiling, always silent.

Steel says that Ruby's plan of destroying the plays would only prevent entry from this reality, not close the fissure entirely. They must now give the spirit of the unknown woman what she wants, or perhaps deny it to her. With Sapphire's help, Ruby enters the fantasy realm to try to reach her.

In the fantasy realm, Ruby becomes stuck in a loop saying "*I need to talk to you*" until the woman appears. Ruby sees her with a young man who promises to walk with her later. The fantasy world becomes more chaotic, with characters and scenes overlaying each other and the noise of the flood underlying it all.

In the real world, Sapphire argues that Arthur isn't a normal human being and may be able to help. Steel isn't keen though.

Ruby asks the woman why she is here. The woman hums *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* as a bell tolls in the background.

Sapphire senses the woman, who finally speaks. She is cold and lost. Sapphire says her name is Louisa, and she's seventeen years old. Arthur senses that she's been waiting for so many years. The woman mutters that Henry said he'd be here at midnight, and she's angry that he isn't. Meanwhile Arthur is reliving the disappearance of his own father.

Steel works out that it is the woman who left Henry, not the other way round. Louisa is the woman whose headstone Sapphire read earlier. Ruby has also realised this in the fantasy world. Louisa died at midnight on Christmas Eve 1824. She tripped into an icy ditch while running to the church to meet

Henry, the water freezing around her. Her body wasn't found until the water thawed. Every night for a month, Henry waited for her at the church at midnight, singing to keep himself warm, but Louisa didn't realise that. The only way she knew how to try to find him was by forcing her way into the fictions of lonely writers who seemed to understand her. Steel tells her it's time for her to go.

Louisa's spirit finally departs and the time distortion is gone. But Ruby is still trapped within the scenarios of the fantasy realm, and Arthur sees that the scripts have changed to include her in all of them. Arthur asks if Ruby is trapped forever, but he gets no reply.

TRIGGERS

The trigger for the fissure between fiction and reality is Ruby's trick of playing the piano without touching the keys. Ruby was presumably doing this when Steel first spotted her at the theatre piano, though this isn't clear. Once she realises what has happened, Ruby can close the fissure, but anyone still inside it will be trapped (and this will not deal with the pre-existing time distortion).

The time distortion that Sapphire, Steel and Ruby were originally sent here to investigate predates the fissure by a couple of centuries. The trigger for this is the anger and hatred that the spirit of Louisa feels towards her beau Henry as she believes he abandoned her. Convincing her that she is mistaken will allow Louisa to depart the theatre and the time distortion will end, as will the fissure that Ruby opened.

IRREGULARITIES

There are two separate but linked irregularities at the theatre. The most obvious one, because it causes people to vanish, is the fissure between fantasy and reality. Real people swallowed up by the fissure will find themselves in a series of fictional scenarios, each based on a play performed at the theatre. The people they encounter are all fictional but have the faces of real people. The only exceptions are if more than one person fall into the fissure and they encounter each other. If a real person dies within a fictional scenario, they find themselves in another. The only way they can escape back into the real world is by breaking through the fourth wall to the theatre audience that can be heard from time to time. Sapphire and Steel did this by subverting the scenarios they were trapped in by introducing humour and were eventually rejected by the fictional world. In the following story, *Cruel Immortality*, Sapphire works out a way to rescue somebody from the fictional world after the fissure has closed.

The second irregularity, which may not be apparent at first, is the ghost of Louisa Anne Teddingley, who died in 1824 at the age of 17. Over the years since then, she has tried to communicate by altering the scripts of the

RUBY

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Craft (Music) 5, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 3, Technology 2

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Alien Senses – Enhanced sense of music and time, including sensing into the past by means of suitable songs or melodies
Clairaudience - As Clairvoyance but sound only
Elemental Agent
Hypnosis (Minor)
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Keen Senses (Minor) - Hearing
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telekinesis – Ruby can use this to play musical instruments or operate equipment associated with music or sound remotely
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

plays performed at the theatre, particularly those dealing with abandonment. She can also manifest and control water of any sort, as she did during the flood of 1870. Louisa may occasionally be glimpsed or heard singing songs such as *In the Bleak Midwinter* and *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, carols which Henry sung to himself while waiting for her at midnight at the church. Louisa also briefly possesses Ruby.

Louisa is presumably a ghost in the same sense as the ghosts of *Assignment II*, and is one of the reactivated personae that persist in the atmosphere after death.

This is one of the few assignments in which there is no malevolent force behind what is happening.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND RUBY)

This story marks the debut of Ruby, a fellow elemental with an affinity for music, which she explains has links with time. She is well-spoken, intelligent, sardonic and with a tendency towards intellectual superiority. She also has unrequited feelings for Steel and possible jealousy towards Sapphire. Stats for Ruby were provided in *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!*, but they were written without access to the audios. Updated stats for her are provided opposite.

While trying to impress Steel with her piano trick, Ruby accidentally opens up a fissure between reality and fiction. This isn't something she can normally do, and it's revealed to be a side effect of the time disturbance already present at the theatre.

Ruby uses her affinity with music to play the theatre's piano remotely, without touching the keys. Music also seems to be a means to focus her abilities, for example singing appropriate songs to sense back further and further in time. She also calms Arthur with her powers.

Ruby tells Arthur Bunnings that she doesn't have any parents, with an implication that she never had any. This is likely to be the same for other elementals.

At the end of this story, Ruby is trapped in the fictional reality, but she's rescued by Sapphire's song in *Cruel Immortality*.

When Sapphire is trapped in the fictional world of *Great Expectations*, she is in the role of Estella and encounters other characters from the novel, including Ruby as Miss Havisham and Steel as Mathew Pocket. Similarly, in the world of *Cinderella*, Sapphire becomes Cinders, with Steel as her father and Arthur as Buttons.

Ruby says that Sapphire without Steel is like Lead without Jet, implying that the latter two also often work together.

Steel uses his strength to break through the door into the theatre's Circle and later to smash a table in the *Great Expectations* scenario.

Sapphire uses her powers to analyse both the theatre and Arthur Burrows. There is frequent telepathic contact between her, Steel and Ruby in this story, though contact between the real world and the fictional scenarios is difficult (requiring additional Resolve + Convince rolls).

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This story's title is a line from the first verse of Christina Rossetti's poem originally published in 1872 under the title *A Christmas Carol* but more usually known as *In the Bleak Midwinter*, which describes the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. It's most famous as a popular Christmas carol with music composed by Gustav Holst in 1906 which Ruby plays on the piano in the story. The title is relevant because of Louisa's death in water that freezes around her.

The story was a festive offering released a month or so before Christmas. The second half almost turns into a musical with several verses of a (fictional) music hall song interspersing the scenes. Could the GM persuade their players to join in, unlike Sapphire and Steel, who don't? Perhaps more bizarrely, Sapphire and Steel trade innuendoes and double entendres to escape from the fictional world.

For *Doctor Who* fans, the fictional realm has obvious similarities to the Land of Fiction from *The Mind Robber*. Choosing different types of fiction for the elementals to interact with will change the feel of the assignment. The *Jeeves and Wooster* stories for a comedic setting, or *Frankenstein* or *Dracula* for a horror feel, for example.

One of the plays within this story, *The Abandoned Lady*, concerns the *Mary Celeste*. In *Assignment I*, we learned that Sapphire, Steel and Lead were involved in the events that lead to the disappearance of its crew, and the play seems to incorporate their appearance on the ship.

The fact that there is no evil force working against the elementals might be under-whelming for some players, and the GM is free to add Time or the Darkness into the mix if they feel the need to liven things up.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Ruby:** An elemental agent with an affinity with music.
- **Arthur Bunnings:** Director of the now almost derelict Capital Palace Theatre. Harbours feelings of abandonment over the disappearance of his father (who subsequently appears in *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*). Slightly psychic. Tendency to babble.
- **Louisa Anne Teddingley:** 17-year-old who died on her way to the theatre in 1824 and who now haunts it.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Ruby only created the fissure, not the fictional realm itself. So that still exists for use in further assignments.

CRUEL IMMORTALITY

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in January 2007; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Two* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

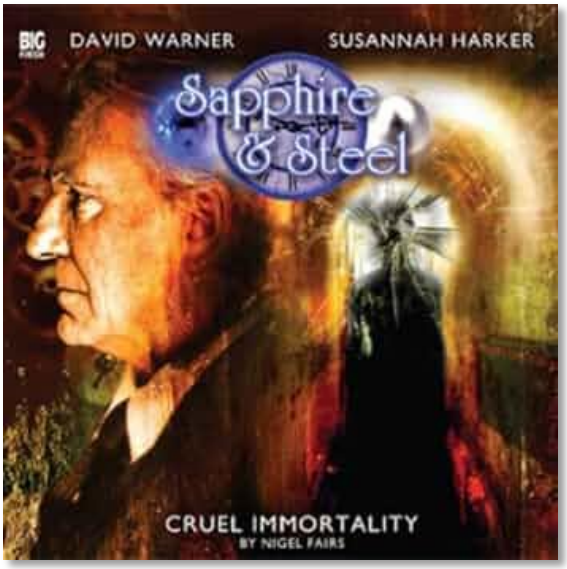
At Tithonus Hall Retirement Home deep in the woods, the news on the wireless reports that the last traces of war-time gloom are being thrown off in Britain. Enid, a resident, is reading Tennyson's poem about immortality.

Another resident, Mrs P, is being washed by a carer. She's scared of creatures that come in the dark, through the shadows, and chase her through the woods until they catch her and beat her. She knows it will happen every night for the rest of her life, even though the carer tells her it's just a dream and she can't run through the woods in a wheelchair anyway.

Another carer is being rough as she dresses Stanley. He objects to her smoking in his room and says she's turned ugly inside. It's Stanley's birthday today, so there will be special entertainment.

Mrs P is still insistent that the creatures are after her and have been for years. They knew her Ted was looking out for her, but now they've got him. She claims she can't dream as she can't sleep because the howling of the Beast keeps her awake. The carer reassures her it's kept under lock and key. He gets her back into her wheelchair and leaves her with the wireless on. Mrs P doesn't want to go to the special entertainment as the music man frightens her.

The carers complain to each other about the residents. Most of them can't stand the old people who live here, though one, Victoria, is sympathetic towards them.



Steel enters Mrs P's room, but she thinks it's her Ted come to rescue her. Although he denies it, Mrs P is insistent. He asks her the year as although it's the present outside, inside it's the 20th Century. Mrs P tells him that as it's Stanley's birthday, it must be April 14th, and the year is 1949.

Steel tells her he's here to investigate a time distortion. For some reason, this building is manifesting images from fifty-eight years ago. Mrs P is one of those images, but not like a photograph. Steel opens the window and determines that it's 1949 outside as well, and certainly a different time of year. He doesn't yet know exactly why he's here as he didn't have a briefing.

Steel sits with Mrs P. She realises that he's lost somebody and isn't used to being alone. She tells him she and Ted were together for years, but she can't even remember his face. She's been here for a very long time and the mind turns to mush in a place like this.

Down in the basement, a group of carers taunt the Beastie for laughs.

Steel admits there was somebody once. They

worked well together, but she disappeared. These things happen in the war they're involved with. He tells Mrs P that her name was Sapphire and that he's finding it difficult working alone. They complemented each other perfectly. Steel feels tired. He's never stopped to talk and think before, and asks Mrs P what it's like to be mortal and human, what it's like to be old with her life behind her. He says she has a choice to end it right now, unlike him, at least not in the way she imagines. Mrs P's arm is painful, and Steel notices it's covered in sores. A bell rings to signify the arrival of the entertainer.

Down in the basement, the carers get the Beast back in the cage and head back upstairs.

Victoria, the more sympathetic carer, pops into Mrs P's room to check on her and asks if Steel is a relative. He insists that her sores need looking at and demands to see whoever is in charge. Victoria says she'll take him to see Matron.

Stanley insists that he doesn't want to watch "*that idiot*" the entertainer, but a carer tells him to be quiet. The entertainer rattles his tambourine.

As Mrs P is being wheeled to the day room to watch the music man, she says she doesn't like him as he frightens her. Victoria tells Steel he comes to the home on birthdays. They don't get many visitors; the relatives are happy just to abandon the old people at the home. Steel again asks what year it is. When Victoria asks him what year he thinks it should be, he replies it could be any number of years. The carer and Mrs P both laugh at him.

In the day room, the tambourine man finishes with a flourish as Victoria parks Mrs P's wheelchair next to Stanley, who warns Steel that Matron is a harridan! A birthday cake is produced, but Stanley isn't happy with it.

Steel asks Stanley how old he is, but he and Enid disagree over whether he's 531 or 541. Enid is 534. She was born on April 4th, 1930 "Old Time", which apparently is before the years stopped on December 31st, 1949.

Stanley announces that it's time for a little game. He begins singing a song, *What's the Matter, Fido?*, and the others join in. Matron enters the day room and demands quiet! When she leaves, Enid and Mrs P are worried that Matron will punish them.

Elsewhere, the carers are moaning about the old people again. Steel ask them when they arrived, which is also December 31st, 1949. The carers become suspicious, but Matron enters. She chides one of them for smoking on the premises, which is against the rules. The carer is sent to her room to be punished while Matron takes Steel to her office.

In the carer's room, a deep voice tells the carer to lie down, and there is the sound of rushing wind. Downstairs, the other carers wonder how long she'll be kept in there. Last time, it was four years.

Enid and Mrs P bicker with Stanley. They tell him he doesn't understand them as the carers don't hurt him. But he disagrees: none of them are the same as they used to be. They're all decaying but not dying, like the walking dead. Nobody is coming to their rescue, but Enid insists that everything will be fine.

In her office, Matron reassures Steel that the carer being punished will be dealt with in the appropriate manner. Steel says he's here to investigate a distortion in time. He believes he's only been here for just over an hour, but Matron queries whether he's certain of that. She insists that the war has only been over for a few years. Steel hears something howling, but Matron tells him it's just a pet.

The howling is heard in the day room, and Mrs P starts crying. Enid comforts her, telling her it's just the Beast. Stanley becomes angry again and tells Enid he would never have married her if he'd known that she would turn into a sentimental old fool!

In the basement, the carers are with the Beast again, but they're going to play a new game: Burn Out.

Matron asks if Steel plays chess, but he says no. Nevertheless, she produces a beautiful hand-carved set. She also asks what room she can offer him. Steel replies that he doesn't want a room as he's not a resident. But Matron tells him he looks so tired and lonely.

All the carers start playing Burn Out, in which the winner is the one who can leave their hands in a hole in a scalding steam pipe the longest. They put their hands in and scream. In the day room, Stanley also cries out. The carers can feel their flesh scalding, until Matron intervenes and stops them. She warns them that they wouldn't want to join their friend in the Nowhere Place, would they! She can think of a few ways to liven things up for them, but first the residents need to be put to bed.

Steel returns to the day room. He got lost in the corridors and feels tired. He sits down and notices that Stanley's hand is scalded. Steel saw something out the window but he can't remember what. He accuses the carers of cruelty but realises it's not usually like him to be concerned. Enid says the carers are just young. They don't understand but they will in time. In the meantime, they're punished. The residents start singing *Fight the Good Fight*.

In the Nowhere Place, the carer being punished says she'll be good. The deep voice asks if she promises to play by the rules. She does so, as she couldn't bear to come back again, and she's returned to her room, where Matron tells her she has a resident to put to bed.

Steel is looking for Matron and bumps into a carer. He saw them all putting their hands into the steam, but the carer doesn't have a mark on his skin.

The punished carer takes Enid back to her room. Enid asks after the carer's husband. The carer denies she's married, but she has a wedding ring on a ribbon around her neck. The carer says he's an arrogant bully and she doesn't love him any more. Enid says she has all the time in the world to change him, as she should have tried to change Stanley. Enid admits she was a terrible, selfish child. Her mother said she was a right little madam! Her father called her independent but she was just stubborn. The carer tells Enid she's horrid and ugly for being old, to which Enid replies that she'll be old too one day.

Matron is with the Beast, but her voice changes to the deep tones of the person who sent the carer to the Nowhere Place earlier.

Steel tells Mrs P about seeing the carers scald themselves but being left unmarked. She speculates that it might be the de Grey effect, but Steel can't remember what that is. He's tired again and sits down while Mrs P puts the wireless on. She tells him that this is a prison and that the year 1949 is a trap. She hasn't thought this clearly in years. Steel suddenly remembers about the de Grey effect and that Mrs P referred to Matron as the trigger. He realises that Mrs P is Sapphire!

Matron addresses the carers and tells them

that it has been brought to her attention that some of them consider their work here to be undemanding. As a reward for their hard work, she has arranged a little surprise for them. She will allow them to play with the Beast, to torture it and do with it whatever they wish, with absolutely no rules at all.

Steel asks Mrs P what happened to her, but he's so tired. She tells him that's how it starts. Tiredness, a dull ache in the bones, the need to sleep. But Steel says that they don't sleep and they don't age. Whatever it is, it's happening to him too now. Sapphire has been here for over four hundred years and has become human and grown so old she's forgotten who she was. She was aware she was trapped in linear time, but was too weary to do anything about it. After about seventy years, she looked into a mirror and realised she was old. She was frightened and wanted to leave this place, but they wouldn't let her. Not just Matron and the carers, but others who hide in the shadows. The others who won the war.

The carer Enid was talking to asks Victoria if she thinks her husband still loves her. She can remember when she first came here with him. They had only been married for a week and had been honeymooning in Brighton. She still has a heart-shaped pebble her husband found and gave her. It was his idea to come here; he said he'd met this man. But she's sick of it now and wants to get out.

Mrs P can hardly remember how it felt to be Sapphire. It was so long ago, like another life. She can't remember arriving here, and Steel realises that he can only vaguely remember his own arrival. They were somewhere else before, but where? Mrs P turns off the wireless as she needs to sleep.

Steel remembers that they were arguing about Ruby. In a flashback, we hear the argument they had. Steel was of the opinion that they had to move on, while Sapphire wanted to rescue Ruby. Steel could not empathise. If they did attempt a rescue, they risked losing the war and allowing the end of time itself. He insisted that they must abandon Ruby. Sapphire argued that they are fighting for the right to exist. In which case, what is Ruby? Just cannon fodder? What's the difference between them and their enemy? Where's their respect for life? Steel accused her of starting to think like a human being and forgetting who and what they are. Sapphire thought they might grow and advance and learn to be like humans, enjoying both the small and large things of life. Steel ended their partnership and stormed out.

Mrs P remembers that it was Steel who left *her* and that their enemy realised this and saw she was vulnerable. They exploited her weakness, her need to be comforted. They lured her in. Steel realises it was the transient beings who trapped Sapphire here. But how did *he* get here? Mrs P wonders if he needed Sapphire more than he thought.

One of the male carers is talking to Harry, the husband of the carer who, according to Victoria, has now gone AWOL. Outside, Victoria tries to persuade her to come back. But it's too late: they're coming! There's the sound of machinegun fire and explosions approaching, but it isn't real. A transient being

recites a nursery rhyme about a WW2 doodlebug, then both carers wake up back in their rooms to await punishment.

Steel recounts their previous encounters with the transient beings. Mrs P suggest that it was their emotional attachment to each other that allowed the transients to trap them both here. She has learned what it's like to be a human, their hopes and dreams and the distractions they use to stop remembering that they're mortal. It's a weakness but it's also wonderful. It's what the transients felt so threatened by, what made Sapphire and Steel so efficient. Steel feels tired again.

Harry and the remaining carers plan a new game: Hunt the Beast. They force the Beastie out of the cage at gunpoint, and this time it's a hunt to the death!

Enid's carer is back and has brought her a cup of tea before bedtime. The carer says she never really listened to her mother. She was a right little madam! Her mother was blown to pieces by a doodlebug when she went back to fetch her daughter's teddy bear.

Looking through Mrs P's photo album, Steel realises something and wakes her. There's a picture of the residents taken at Christmas, but which one? Mrs P says it was taken 412 years ago, when she'd been here for a year. Steel says she was right, it *is* the de Grey effect. The carers are also in the picture and they look the same as they do now. Steel explains that each of the carers has a corresponding resident: one is a younger Stanley, another is young Enid, and so on. Each resident ages for one of the carers, bearing their scars and signs of ageing. But Mrs P doesn't have a corresponding carer. Steel describes her as Sapphire's de Grey shadow. Mrs P argues that he's wrong, as she can remember all their past exploits. But he insists she's just Sapphire's shadow.

Out in the woods, the Beast is being hunted. In Mrs P's room, they hear the sound of shots and Mrs P starts bleeding. Steel goes to investigate despite her pleading with him to stay.

The carer is still talking to Enid, her corresponding resident. They both remember the bombed out house with their mother buried in the rubble. They dream of it every night. The carer says there is an escape and insists Enid drink her tea. But Matron intervenes and knocks it out of Enid's hand.

The carers are about to finish the Beast off when Steel arrives and stops them. The Beast recognises him and with effort manages to speak with Sapphire's voice!

At breakfast the following morning, Stanley scolds Enid for carrying on so last night as she's not the only one with bad memories. He points out Victoria, who is still waiting for her GI to return, and Harold, who witnessed his entire regiment cut down. They all have nightmares, even Stanley himself. He knows what it feels like to see Enid and himself decaying when they used to look like their young counterparts. Matron is furious, which will mean punishments for all of them. He blames the carers as the rotten eggs in this basket. It's high time they were reminded who's really in charge here!

Steel tries to get through to Sapphire, who has endured centuries of pain and torture at the hands of the carers. She has cried for help every night, but nobody has been there, not even Steel. Sapphire remembers that he abandoned her and she gave up hope and thought. Unbearable pain was the only thing worth living for; it was the only thing that kept her alive. But she died inside. Steel explains to her about the de Grey effect in this place. The young people have done a deal with the transients: while they remain young and immortal, their de Grey shadows become old and frail. Sapphire wants to see Mrs P, her own shadow. But Steel tells her the only way to reverse the de Grey effect is to destroy the shadows, all of them.

MRS P

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**1**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Craft (Whittling) 2

TRAITS
Amnesia (Major)
Forgetful
Immortal (Major)
Impaired (Major) – Unable to walk (uses a wheelchair)
Weakness (Major) – Any damage the Beast (or Sapphire, if restored) should take is immediately transferred to Mrs P

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 4

Steel shows Sapphire into Mrs P's room. He is again tired and needs to sit down. Sapphire sees her reflection in the mirror, that of the ghastly Beast, and changes her appearance back to that of her former self. Steel instructs a carer to gather the others together outside as they're going to burn the house down. But he pauses part way through his explanation, out of breath and exhausted. He is led away to the day room for a sit down and a cup of tea.

The younger version of Stanley recognises Sapphire from long ago. He tells her there is no way out of here, and she takes him to join the others for a cup of tea.

In the day room, Sapphire meets Mrs P, but Steel warns her that she is only a de Grey shadow and they have to destroy them all. Matron appears and wants everyone to meet their new pet, Mr Steel. It's a shadow of the real Steel, but Sapphire analyses the new arrival and realises they're both real but different aspects of Steel. Just as the Beast embodied Sapphire's fears, the new Beast embodies Steel's. Steel says he isn't afraid of anything, but Sapphire disagrees. She says he's afraid of change and of becoming human.

The residents are afraid of dying, which is what makes them human, and were all drawn here by the promise of immortality. Now, they're all trapped here with their fears and with the

THE BEAST

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**1**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Fighting 1

TRAITS
Amnesia (Major) – The Beast is actually Sapphire, but until her memories are restored (e.g. by seeing Steel), she uses these stats
Distinctive
Immortal (Major)
Immunity – Any damage the Beast would take is immediately transferred to Mrs P (if Sapphire is restored, this trait is retained by her until Mrs P ceases to exist)
Mute

TECH LEVEL: N/A
STORY POINTS: 2

ENID

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**1**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Knowledge 1

TRAITS
Immortal (Major)
Stubborn
Weakness (Major) – Any damage her corresponding carer should take is immediately transferred to Enid

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 2

horror, cruelty and agony of immortality. Steel accuses Matron and her kind of being leeches, feeding off the residents' pain.

Enid produces a gun and shoots her younger counterpart to end it. The younger Sydney takes the gun and his older shadow tells him to end it as well. Matron tries to intervene, but Sydney and each of the others shoot their counterparts and themselves until there are just Mrs P, Sapphire, Steel and Matron left.

Mrs P reveals that while at the retirement home, she took up two hobbies. One was writing stories and the other was woodcarving. She has carved an intricate wooden chess set,

STANLEY

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**1**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Convince 2

TRAITS
Argumentative
Immortal (Major)
Weakness (Major) – Any damage his corresponding carer should take is immediately transferred to Stanley

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 2

the same as Matron's. Sapphire reads a passage from one of Mr P's stories in which Ruby opens a box. Inside, the chess pieces glow slightly, and Ruby starts to sing *What's the Matter, Fido?* As the song is heard in the day room, a wind picks up. Matron tries to forbid Ruby from continuing but is swept away into nothing. Mrs P is also gone.

Ruby materialises and thanks Sapphire for the lyrics. Ruby, Sapphire and Steel have all been freed from their respective traps by the combination of Ruby singing the song and the transdimensional chess set. Steel is ungrateful and stalks away, but Sapphire and Ruby bid each other farewell.

TRIGGERS

Matron is stated in the dialogue as being a trigger, but quite how isn't clear. Mrs P suggests that Sapphire and Steel's emotional bond to each other is what enabled the transients to lure and trap them here.

IRREGULARITIES

The irregularities in this story are transient

beings, creatures like those which first appeared in *Assignment VI*. They are diametrically opposed to the elementals and

MATRON

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Fighting 1, Knowledge 3, Medicine 2, Subterfuge 3, Technology 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) – The elementals
Alien
Hypnosis (Minor)
Indomitable
Menacing
Obligation (Major) – The transient beings' higher authority
Psychic
Psychic Illusions (Special) – see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p40
Shapeshift (Major)
Telepathy
Teleport
Transient Being
Voice of Authority
Vortex

EQUIPMENT
Time Travel Box – see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p83

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 8

CARER

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Fighting 1, Fighting 1, Medicine 1, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Major)
Immortal (Major)
Immunity – Any damage a carer would take is immediately transferred to their corresponding resident
Obligation (Major) – The transient beings

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 1-3

the authority they report to, but we still know very little about them or their abilities. A war between the elementals and the transients has now broken out, and Sapphire and Steel are targeted as they are some of the most efficient elementals. The transients are represented in this story by Matron and (briefly) the visiting entertainer. Matron can affect human perceptions, including creating illusory threats from her subjects' minds. She also has a time travel box in the guise of a chess set, as the transients in *Assignment VI* did, which she uses to send disobedient carers to the Nowhere Place, a desolate and lonely void.

The entertainer plays the tambourine. We don't hear him speak, but could he be Johnny Jack, one of the transients from *Assignment VI*, who also posed as an entertainer with a tambourine?

The carers are complicit in the transients' plan, as they have made a deal to gain immortality at the cost of their de Grey shadows, the residents. The residents are now very old (but

not as physically old as they should be, having lived for several hundred years). Their memories are failing after so long as there are some inconsistencies. For example, both Mrs P and Enid at one point or another claim their former husbands to be somebody called Ted. In fact, neither are correct as Enid's husband was Harry (whose shadow uses the name Stanley), while Mrs P is thinking of Steel.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND RUBY)

As in *Assignment VI*, Steel hasn't had a briefing for this mission. Like *Assignment VI*, this is because the set-up is a trap.

We learn that after the end of the previous story, *Water Like a Stone*, Sapphire and Steel had an argument over the fate of Ruby. Steel considered Sapphire to be too emotionally involved and ended their partnership. During their argument (heard in flashback), Steel says that Ruby has ceased to exist on this plane, Sapphire points out that they too had ceased to exist for some time before they were rescued by Silver. The implication is that it was Silver who rescued them from the transient beings' trap they were left in at the end of *Assignment VI*. This is one option that P.J. Hammond was considering for any continuation of the TV series, but which David McCallum wasn't keen on.

Steel states that his and Sapphire's relationship is a business one, which is a change from previous hints at a more romantic link between them. It seems the rift between them over Ruby has soured their close friendship. However, it's their bond with each other that has enabled the transients to trap them both in the retirement home.

At the start of this story, Steel is acting without a partner, and his bluntness and lack of Sapphire's analytical powers limit his effectiveness. As the story progresses, he starts to fall under the spell of the transients' trap. Steel and anyone else brought to the retirement home gains Immortality (Major) until they leave, and has to make a successful Difficulty 18 Resolve + Strength roll every 15 minutes or: reduce an Attribute by 1 point as they age; or remove an existing trait; or gain a Bad one (such as Impaired, Clumsy, Forgetful or Amnesia); at the GM's discretion until they reach a suitably enfeebled state like that of the residents.

Elementals are confirmed to not be human and not need to sleep. They are also said to be immortal, which is contrary to P.J. Hammond's intent. See the text box below for information on Immortal Elementals.

IMMORTAL ELEMENTALS

The **Elemental Agent** trait set out on page 7 of *Sapphire and steel Have Been Assigned!* was written using information gleaned from the TV series and from creator P.J. Hammond's stated intentions for the elementals, which includes them being very long lived but not immortal. If, however, the GM prefers elementals to be immortal in their games, the **Elemental Agent** trait can be updated to provide **Immortal (Major)** in addition to the other listed benefits. This increases its cost to **5 Character Points**.

Steel comes to suspect Mrs P of being Sapphire, having been trapped in the retirement home for so long that she has aged and forgotten who she really is. She has however retained enough subconscious memory of her elemental status to be able to create the transdimensional chess set (by spending Story Points). However, Mrs P is later revealed only to be Sapphire's "de Grey shadow", a term that Steel uses along with "de Grey effect". These are references to Dr Aubrey de Grey, an English biomedical gerontologist who has theorised that medical technology may be able to prevent humans alive today from dying from age-related conditions. The real Sapphire has actually been

the Beast for the past 400 years and is a creature of instinct who has forgotten who she once was.

The song written by Mrs P is later heard in *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*. Here, in conjunction with the chess set (a copy of Matron's), it empowers Ruby to free herself from the fictional realm she was trapped in at the end of *Water Like a Stone*, and to then free them all from the retirement home. The song starts "*What's the matter, Fido?*", which is as good a title as any.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is the first audio in the Transients War story-arc, which could be run as a campaign. Following on from *Assignment VI*, the arc covers *Cruel Immortality, The Mystery of the Missing Hour* (though only indirectly)*, Second Sight, Zero* and *Wall of Darkness.*

The story's title is a quotation from Tennyson's poem *Tithonus*, the subject of which gains immortality but not eternal youth: "*Me only cruel immortality Consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms*." Extracts are quoted by Enid during the story, and the setting is named the Tithonus Hall Retirement Home.

From what Steel says to Mrs P, we can calculate his "present" as being 2007. Going by Enid's age and date of birth, the retirement home should be in 2464, but it's stuck in 1949.

Sapphire doesn't appear in the first two episodes (except as Mrs P and the Beast, but their identities aren't revealed until later). In a game, Steel's initial investigation would probably best be run for a single player, with Mrs P and the Beast as NPCs. An option for players who normally play other elementals could be to have them instead play one of the residents. Mrs P is possible but might make her link to Sapphire too obvious. Using Enid or Stanley, or perhaps the carer Victoria, as other player characters could act as a red herring.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Mrs P:** Elderly resident at the home. Confined to a wheelchair; her mind wanders. Enjoys whittling. She is actually Sapphire's de Grey shadow.
- **Enid:** Elderly resident at the home. Used to be married to Stanley; they bicker. Stubborn. Reads poetry.
- **Stanley:** Elderly resident at the home. Used to be married to Enid. Cantankerous trouble-maker.
- **Matron:** In charge of the retirement home. Domineering over residents and carers. Actually a transient being.
- **Carers:** Victoria, Harry and the others. Most are cruel and uncaring of the residents because of the boredom of their immortality. Afraid of Matron and her punishments.
- **The Beast:** A feral creature kept in a cage in the home's basement and tormented by the carers to ease their boredom. Actually the real Sapphire who has become almost mindless.
- **Ruby:** A fellow elemental agent; Ruby only makes a cameo appearance in this story. See page 133 for Ruby's stats.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Dorian Gray's picture is similar in effect to the de Grey shadows. The similarity in names is coincidental… or is it? Just who - or what - is Dorian Gray?

PERFECT DAY

ADVISORY WARNING

Although Big Finish didn't give this story an advisory content warning, it contains references to miscarriage.

PUBLICATION

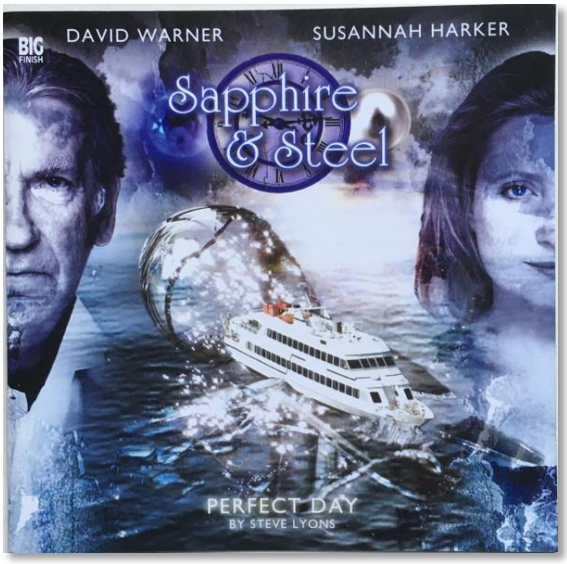
Released on CD in March 2007; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Two* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

On the luxury yacht *Perfect Day*, Jennifer Louise Holloway and Richard Charles Muldoon are being married by the Captain. Jennifer falters with the wedding vows as whispering voices are heard. She repeats "*till death us do part… until death… until death…*"

Sapphire and Steel arrive on the boat. Sapphire tells Steel it's a luxury motor yacht built in 1982, though the motor isn't running. It's drifting, but Sapphire doesn't think it's been abandoned. It was chartered by a party for a wedding cruise from which some of them failed to return. The date was Tuesday, September 14th, 1999. Sapphire says that she and Steel were indisposed at the time, and the ripples from the incident were only small at first, though they grew as they spread outward. The surrounding mist is probably not natural.

Sapphire has changed her clothes into something appropriate for a wedding and urges Steel to do the same before they go below to meet the passengers and crew. In the saloon, the wedding speeches are underway. The groom's younger brother and best man James is drunkenly making his speech and becoming emotional. The bride's mother, Lydia Holloway, takes over and toasts the happy couple.



Steel enters with Sapphire and speaks up, to the shock of the attendees. Lydia knows they weren't invited to the wedding, and the Captain knows they weren't on board the yacht. Jen is upset and hurries out to get some air. Lydia tells Richard to go after her.

Richard catches up with Jen and tells her to go back and apologise to everyone. But she says she can't go on with the lies any more. She thought they had a future once. Richard persuades her to come back with him for Nicholas's sake.

Sapphire is talking with the Captain, who tells her that the yacht was his dream. He hires it out, mainly for wedding functions. This one is a little different. Whereas most parties want to just circle the bay for an hour or so, for this one they set sail six days ago and have had three ports of call since then. It's a combined wedding and honeymoon with close family and friends invited, all organised by Lydia. She obviously likes to be involved in her daughter's life! She's also a lady of considerable means. They're due back in port tomorrow at 09:00, but they're ahead of schedule and the Captain is allowing the yacht to drift for a while.

Sapphire comments that she's only seen one steward for all the wedding tables, which the Captain puts down to cut-backs. They can't afford the frills any more, despite Mrs Holloway's resources. Sapphire points out that they're listening to recorded music but the stage is laid out for an orchestra, and that the tables are set for forty but there are only fourteen people here, including the Captain and his staff.

Steel is pressing James on what he was thinking when he was making his speech earlier. Lydia intervenes and tells Steel that he was only a bit emotional. James wanders off, leaving Steel with Lydia. Steel comments that a wedding day is about looking forward to the rest of the couple's lives. But Lydia disagrees, saying it's about one perfect day for her daughter. The future comes later. Richard and Jen reappear, and Lydia announces the couple's first dance.

In one of the cabins, Sapphire meets with Gold. He's annoyed that he has been told to keep out of sight, but Sapphire says that she and Steel can't watch him as well as the humans. Gold insists he doesn't need watching. But Sapphire reminds him that he acted without thinking on the steam train. He's only here because they might need him later.

Gold points out that the cabin they are in is unoccupied, with no luggage or clothing apparent. But the towels are damp and the kettle is warm. Somebody must have been here this morning, and it's the same in at least six other cabins. Sapphire is annoyed that Gold has been exploring the yacht. She warns him that it will be twice as difficult to get out of the time bubble around the yacht as it was to get in. At the moment, they are trapped here.

Lydia is talking to somebody. She tells it that it's much harder now "they" are here. The Captain interrupts her, asking if she's talking to their invisible friend again. Lydia admits she's very afraid. She knows what the strangers want and what they can do: they could take all this from them, from her Jennifer. The Captain questions whether the strangers are who they say they are and maybe they should tell them the truth. But Lydia considers there's too much at stake. The Captain can't help her, but Lydia says he's done enough, giving her the means, a piece of one soul to keep Nicholas safe. Lydia thinks it's a fair exchange. She just hopes she can bring herself to take two lives.

Sapphire tells Steel that she can sense other people here across the years. There was a child, nine years old, who was seasick and wanted to go home. The parents of the groom, thrilled that their son was marrying into a wealthy family. A lonely woman dancing in her cabin alone. They're all gone now, but she can't tell how. There are too many days all crushed together. But they're all the same day, September 14th, 1999. Steel asks what happened on the yacht on that day. There was the wedding, but also the ship went down during the night. The survivors were found in two lifeboats the following morning, but none of them could remember what happened after they returned to their cabins after the reception. Fourteen people who weren't meant to die were lost causing ripples and a few other manifestations such as the mist outside. Suddenly, Sapphire gaps as she senses another ship here, a wooden one pressing close. Steel draws her back to this time, and she tells him that whatever is happening here is more advanced than they thought. It's almost through!

Gold enters Lydia's cabin to find James searching it. Gold offers to help him search if he knew what to look for, but James says it isn't kept here. It must be kept hidden or locked up somewhere else. James tells Gold that Lydia keeps a bottle somewhere. Gold assumes he means alcohol, but James becomes irritated and tells him that he doesn't understand. James can't just forget the present and look forward to the future. He warns Gold to leave now while he can.

Richard and Jen want to retire to their cabin, but Sapphire stops them. She asks about Richard's parents, and Richard tells her that they fell ill as did half the guests and the staff, and were all flown home. Sapphire also comments that there are two berths for lifeboats on the yacht, but both are empty. James blames the Captain's cut-backs. She has also noticed that Jen is pregnant, and the couple tell her of their unborn son, Nicholas.

Steel catches up with Lydia on deck. She says it's her perfect day today with her family and her daughter's wedding. This was the reason for all she had to do for Jen when she was growing up. It has taken months of planning. Steel says the day isn't perfect, but she replies that he missed the most important part. Lydia tells him she used to be a catalogue model, but she was always so jealous of what other people had. Now, she looks back and realises that she was living her dream. But that was before Jennifer's father came along with his promises, and now she wouldn't give up her daughter for anything, just for this one day. Steel points out that she can't hold onto this day forever. That's the nature of time.

There's a scream and Steel hears Gold's telepathic summons. James has fallen overboard and, although Gold threw a life preserver, it's too late. James has disappeared into the mist and is gone. Gold telepathically tells Steel that he was intoxicated by something he found in a bottle. He says that James felt trapped by a vision of the future and by a woman he shared the vision with. But whoever she was, she rejected his vision. James didn't want to be here, and he climbed up onto the side.

The yacht's engines start up, and Steel and Gold realise that Lydia isn't with them any longer. The life preserver reappears back where Gold found it, and he notices there's nobody in the wheelhouse. Sapphire contacts Steel to tell him she's found Lydia asleep in her cabin. She's wearing a nightdress even though she couldn't have had time to change, and she couldn't have reached the door without Sapphire having seen her. Sapphire has also sensed somebody else sleeping in a cabin two doors along. It's James Muldoon and he's been asleep for some time. Steel believes the humans have all been lying to them.

Sapphire and Steel enter the saloon, where Lydia and the others are having breakfast. Lydia seems not to remember them from the previous night. She insists that today is September 14th, the day of the wedding. Steel accuses her of lying and says she knows only too well what time is doing. Lydia continues to call the elementals stowaways. Sapphire realises that time is repeating itself, with everyone and everything on the yacht having returned to where they were at the start of Tuesday, September 14th. Steel tells Lydia that it's 2007, and that she and the others on the yacht have been reliving the same day over and over again for the past eight years.

A little later, Lydia confronts the Captain and asks him to show her his service revolver again and how to load it. They discuss the three

strangers and the Captain tells Lydia that drastic measures are called for.

Gold tells Steel that he hasn't yet identified the trigger. They discuss the missing lifeboats and the other people who were here. They somehow managed to leave, but James was returned to the ship after going overboard. Time must have allowed them to escape. Somewhere on this boat, it's hiding from them. Steel tells Gold to search Lydia's cabin again.

Jen is talking to James and knows he went overboard. He thought he wouldn't come back, but now he has another chance to put things right. But Jen tells him the way things are there's nothing to put right. Maybe they could once have had a future together, but she's married to Richard now.

Sapphire looks in on Richard, ostensibly to see if he has any pre-wedding jitters. Jen was his childhood sweetheart, and he's given up everything for her. He was a high-flying salesman but has told his company that he can't travel and work endless hours any more, so he'll be in a desk job now. He's given up his career for his wife, and Sapphire reminds him that it's also for their unborn son.

Gold is in the wheelhouse with the Captain, who says he can navigate through the mist as he knows these waters like the back of his hand. Gold asks who will take the wheel while the Captain conducts the wedding ceremony later today, but he sidesteps the question. Gold notices a bottle, which the Captain says is a wedding present for the happy couple which he'll give to them as they disembark. Gold asks to take the wheel, and the Captain asks if he would steer the boat during the ceremony.

Steel is hammering on Richard and Jennifer's cabin door, demanding to speak to Jen, when Lydia appears and accuses him of harassing her daughter. He asks her how many times she has relived these events, but Lydia denies knowing anything about missing persons or his time travel fantasies. Steel says that she must have chosen to stay and must be tiring of her "perfect day" now. Did all the others choose to stay? He also points out that it was yesterday when Sapphire told Lydia that they were investigating missing persons, not today, so she should have forgotten this.

After Steel leaves, Jen opens the door. She heard some of what Steel was saying and thinks maybe he was right. But Lydia tells her they have already made their choice and have everything they want here. She tells Jen to go ahead to the saloon for the wedding ceremony, but Lydia has something to do first.

Jen joins Richard and the Captain in the saloon, but Lydia and James are missing. Steel is also here, watching from the back of the room, so Jen tells the Captain they must go ahead as if everything is normal.

Gold has detected James on the deck again and goes to speak with him. Steel telepathically tells him that although Jennifer is wavering, James is the weak link. Sapphire joins in and tells him to be careful; they don't want to lose him this time. She also says that Lydia has found her.

James admits to Gold that he remembers him from yesterday. Gold asks him what it felt like when he went overboard. He felt nothing, just went to sleep and woke in his cabin. He has seen a future in which Jen would leave Richard within four years. But his chance of that future is already gone. Gold encourages him to take a more direct approach, rather than just stand back and let things happen.

Lydia is holding a gun on Sapphire, who tells her that Time rarely keeps its promises. Sapphire knows that Time has broken through on this yacht and that it has promised her and the others something. Lydia replies that Time told her about the elementals. It made her no promises, and she knows that, given a chance, it would reduce everything they are to dust.

Like the elementals, she only wants to be free of Time. Her daughter doesn't deserve what it has in store for her! Sapphire warns that Time only wants to be free too, and that she's only doing what it wants. Lydia fires the gun, but Sapphire takes time back before the bullet strikes her and takes the gun from Lydia before she can fire it.

The wedding ceremony is continuing, but Jen again falters over the vows. Richard urges her on, but James bursts in claiming to have just cause or impediment to prevent the marriage. He reminds them that nothing they do here means anything. Richard tries to silence him, but Steel says they should listen to what he has to say. James claims that Richard doesn't truly love Jen any more but he's selfish and can't stand to lose anything. Jen asks James what he thinks about her motives. He's seen her fate as clearly as the rest of them. Is she being selfish too?

Gold contacts Steel to let him know that he's found Lydia in the wheelhouse where she's again talking to an invisible presence. She's angry at being lied to and threatens to end their arrangement right now by smashing the bottle. She suddenly sees Gold, who asks about the bottle. He knows it's a gift from the Captain: a ship in a bottle. But not just any ship. It's an exact replica of *Perfect Day*. Lydia claims it's just a souvenir, but Gold says they both know that's not true.

Richard is arguing with James again and starts hitting him until Steel intervenes. Richard decides to tell him the truth. He says that Time has shown them the future, including Jen losing their unborn child.

Gold tells Lydia that the bottle is old, as is the model ship, parts of it at least. But Lydia replies that he's mistaken as the Captain had it specially built for them. Gold corrects her. It was an old model that was restored and adapted. He tries to take the bottle from her, but Lydia threatens to shoot him until she remembers that Sapphire has the gun. But Gold doesn't have to take the bottle now. Tomorrow morning, when time resets itself again, it will be back in the wheelhouse, and he can take it then. When Gold departs, the Captain appears and tells Lydia that they have to stop him. He tells Lydia to let Gold see inside the bottle.

Sapphire is with Jen, who just wants to be alone. Jen says it's too late for her to stop what is happening; she's carried Nicholas for so long and can't abandon him now. Sapphire believes that Lydia made a deal with Time to keep them all safe. But Jen replies that there is no deal. Lydia captured Time and imprisoned it within a bottle. Now it does as she instructs.

LYDIA HOLLOWAY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 1

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – Knowledge of her fate and that of her unborn grandson
Indomitable
Passionate Love - Jennifer
Voice of Authority
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 6

THE CAPTAIN

AWARENESS	**6**	**PRESENCE**	**5**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 4, Knowledge 5, Subterfuge 5, Technology 2, Transport 4 (AoE: Boats)

TRAITS
Alien
Charming
Clairvoyant
Immortal (Major)
Immunity – Physical damage
Psychic
Psychometry
Shapeshift (Major)
Telepathy
Teleport
Vortex – Extends to maintaining and manipulating the entire time bubble

TECH LEVEL: All **STORY POINTS:** 10

Steel also knows the truth, having just been told it by Lydia herself, but he says that Time is growing stronger as it feeds off the paradox she has created. Sooner or later, it will escape and consume her. Lydia thinks he's lying. There are fourteen people with everything to lose aboard this yacht and only two of them. How does Steel think he and Sapphire could stop them?

Gold tries to contact Sapphire and Steel but can't. He hears faint whispering voices and realises he's trapped aboard the model yacht inside the bottle. Even though it's a model, there are steps leading down below deck.

Following his mother's instructions, Richard takes Sapphire away and shuts her in a cabin. Steel is locked in another and can't break the lock without alerting the others. They speak telepathically. Steel has realised that something has happened to Gold, as Lydia only referred to the two of them, not three.

On the model ship, Gold is talking to what he believes to be the invisible presence of Time. He knows that it has brought him here in the hope that he'll cease to exist like the poor souls around him. He knows that the whispering he hears in his mind is that of ghosts: Jennifer crying for the loss of her child; Lydia bemoaning her misspent youth. But he can also hear Richard and Jen laughing, the voices of the future, those of unrealised history, the lives Time has stolen. Infinite futures are pressed together here. There is no reply, but Gold knows he will find the presence eventually as it's a very small ship. Without warning, something demented lunges at him.

Sapphire distracts Richard, luring him into her cabin while Steel silently enters and knocks him out. Sapphire tells Steel that the bottle must be the trigger and that Gold must have found it.

Lydia finds James on deck staring into the mist again. She says she should have let him go, but he stayed because of Jen. They argue over whether it's right for Lydia to protect her daughter forever. Lydia says that they were all happy on this day, but James replies that he wasn't as he had to bite his tongue when Jen married his brother instead of him. But it's too late now. There are no more lifeboats.

After Lydia leaves, James tells himself that if he smashes the bottle, there will be no going back to the start this time.

JENNIFER HOLLOWAY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Charming
Inspiring Love – Richard
Emotional Complication (Major) –
Knowledge of her unborn son's fate

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 4

RICHARD HOLLOWAY

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 1, Fighting 1

TRAITS
Inspiring Love – Jennifer
Emotional Complication (Major) –
Knowledge of his unborn son's fate

TECH LEVEL: 5 **STORY POINTS:** 4

In the wheelhouse, Sapphire asks the Captain if he knows where Gold is. He tells her he knows why she's really here but the bottle is gone. He doesn't know who has taken it.

Outside the saloon, Steel hear Gold's faint telepathic communication. Gold tells him the model is not just a model. It's every bit as detailed as the real thing. Steel realises that they're able to hear each other as they're standing on the same spot on the real ship and the model, meaning the two realities are beginning to overlap. Soon Time will be able to break through. Gold tells Steel that there's somebody trapped in the bottle with him. Somebody wild and feral. He manages to tell Steel that it was Lydia and the Captain who trapped him by opening the bottle.

The Captain tells Sapphire about a stranger found on the yacht before the wedding. Nobody questioned who he was, assuming he was somebody else's friend. Sapphire realises it was a splinter of Time. Then the mists rolled in and the ghosts started appearing. Time was driving everyone to madness by showing them all the darkest days of their past. The Captain says that although they were due in port at 09:00 the day after the wedding and were ahead of schedule, land didn't appear. The yacht just ploughed on through the mist. Then they started to notice that the planking of the decking was wider, a few trinkets disappeared, and there was the smell of paint in the air. Sapphire deduces that the real yacht was swapping places with the model one. The walls between dimensions were weakening. The Captain says that eventually he opened a door and found only wood beyond. Then Lydia confronted the stranger and threatened to smash the bottle, the trigger, so Time went

JAMES MULDOON

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Convince 1, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Argumentative
Passionate Love - Jennifer

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

back inside it. The splinter showed each of them their futures. For the Captain, it showed financial ruin from gambling debts. So he went along with Lydia's plan to stay here in a single, repeated day where they were safe.

Gold describes to Steel the feral creature he encountered in the model, its long greasy hair and broken fingernails. Steel tells him they are trying to find the bottle so they can guide him out. But the creature is hunting Gold. He thinks it's had its tongue cut out. Lydia interrupts Steel just as the creature catches up with Gold in one of the cabins.

Sapphire finds James on deck with the bottle. He's thinking of breaking it. Sapphire tells James that Gold is missing and that Lydia must have done something to him. If he breaks the bottle, it would not only free them from the time bubble but also destroy Gold.

Jen finds Richard, still dazed from Steel knocking him out. Richard tells her he knows she doesn't love him any more. But Jen says that if that were true, if she had wanted to fall into the arms of James, doesn't he think she would have done so long ago? Richard admits he's beginning to think they could get through the future they were shown, the death of their son, rather than stay here forever. Jen agrees that things could be far, far worse than being here.

Lydia takes Steel back to the cabin to lock him in again. In the corridor, they find Sapphire with the bottle. The Captain appears as if from nowhere and tells her to hand it over. Steel urges her to smash the bottle and break the trigger while the splinter of Time is inside. Sapphire produces the Captain's revolver and shoots it. But it's not over: the Captain reveals that Time was no longer in the bottle. By breaking it now, they have set Time free and killed the two people inside it: Gold and the real captain of the yacht, Roger David Buckley. The Captain they see here is the splinter of Time. The real Roger Buckley was happy to stay on the yacht at first, but he grew bored so Time swapped places with him.

The Captain vanishes, taking Sapphire with him, and they reappear in the saloon, dancing to the recorded music. He tells her that this perfect moment is what every moment could be like for them both. But Sapphire tells him that this isn't a perfect moment for her and she doesn't choose to dance with him.

Lydia and Steel start searching the cabins for the Captain and Sapphire, meeting James along the way. Lydia is desperate that Jen will soon begin experiencing stomach pains, the first sign that the unborn Nicholas is dying inside her. They hear the yacht's engine start.

Sapphire and the Captain are now in the wheelhouse. Outside, the mist is beginning to lift. Today, time won't be reset and they are due in port at 09:00 and may be ahead of schedule. Sapphire tells the Captain that he isn't that powerful yet and can still be defeated.

In the corridor, Lydia has vanished, leaving just Steel and James. There is the sound of a gunshot. James and Steel rush to find that Lydia has shot Sapphire in the head. Richard and Jen also arrive, and Steel updates them all on the situation. He asks why he should help them now they have killed both Sapphire and Gold.

Steel sends an emergency telepathic message asking for help from any elementals who can hear him. In reply, he faintly hears Gold.

Although Richard tells the others that they should arm themselves against Time, Lydia still thinks she can reason with it. She thinks they can still do a deal for more time here. But Jen tells her that she wants it all over. The past eight years haven't been perfect as they've included the fear of what will happen when it inevitably ends. They all need something more.

Steel finds the Captain in the engine room where he's trying to repair sabotage by Gold. Gold is here and has the bottle. The elementals explain that when the Captain took back time, he also took it back for the service revolver. It has now been used to kill Sapphire rather than to smash the bottle. After all, even Time can't make the same bullet be in two places at once. The bottle was restored, along with those inside it, and it was then easy enough for Steel to lead Gold out.

But Sapphire is still dead, and the Captain says he can take time back again to restore her. Sapphire could live but the bottle would be broken again. All Steel has to do is take the Captain's hand. Gold is horrified!

The humans have come up with a plan against the Captain. Unexpectedly, Sapphire walks in and tells them they can't defeat Time. She is accompanied by the yacht's real captain, freed from the bottle but still insane. She reveals that Time drove him mad and took his tongue so that he couldn't whisper to them when they looked inside the bottle. Sapphire has been gathering all the passengers in the saloon; they all want it to end.

The Captain is confused. He thought that Steel had accepted his offer, but Gold is still holding the intact bottle. Steel and Gold tell him that Sapphire knew what the Captain was planning. She took time back and swapped the bottle from today with the bottle from yesterday, or more precisely from 02:59 this morning. So when Sapphire died and stopped concentrating on the bottle, it was returned to its proper time to be restored by the Captain when he began this day all over again. The Captain's freedom has been an illusion. But he threatens to take time back again so that Sapphire is again in the path of the bullet.

The Captain teleports away, reappearing in the saloon where Sapphire and the passengers are gathered. Richard and Jen reject what he has done for them, their "perfect" day. The Captain tries to turn them against the elementals, but they have changed. The Captain believes that Lydia hasn't, but she says she won't keep them here if that isn't what they want. The Captain reveals that the true reason Lydia set all this up is that her future just showed the darkness of her own death by 2007. Lydia now accepts she's had her time and her dream, and she still has her remaining years to enjoy.

The Captain knows he's defeated but rants that they will all regret this as he's dragged back into the prison of the bottle.

Time is restored and everyone returns to their proper places aboard ship in the early hours of September 15th, 1999, the morning after the

wedding. Jen feels a twinge in her stomach, the start of what the future showed. The real captain has been restored, and all the missing passengers and crew are back. Outside, the mist has gone and the stars can be seen.

At the portside, Steel tells Sapphire that she should have made the humans forget, but she disagrees. The three elementals depart.

TRIGGERS

The trigger here is the ship in a bottle, which was created from an old bottle and an existing model ship adapted into an exact replica of *Perfect Day*. The splinter of Time linked it to the real yacht and used it as a focus for the time bubble. Smashing the bottle removes the time bubble, returning *Perfect Day* and everyone on her to linear time, and restoring the missing people. But anyone within the bottle at the time, including the splinter of Time, would be destroyed.

IRREGULARITIES

The splinter of Time is the irregularity here. It tried to do a deal with Lydia Holloway to preserve her perfect day, but she managed to trap it inside the bottle. However, it fed off the paradox created within the time bubble and grew in strength until it was strong enough to swap places with Captain Roger Buckley, driving him mad, tearing out his tongue and confining him to the model ship. Aboard the real yacht, unknown to Lydia and the others, the splinter has replaced the Captain. The splinter cannot smash the bottle to free itself completely, but must manipulate others to do this.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND GOLD)

When Steel asks Sapphire why they weren't aware of the yacht becoming trapped when it happened in 1999, Sapphire replies that they were indisposed at the time. Presumably it was during the period they were stuck in the transient beings' trap from the end of *Assignment VI*, but it's interesting that Steel seems to have little understanding of the passage of linear time in our dimension.

Gold says to Steel that Sapphire wouldn't approve of more direct action. Steel replies that her methods are effective but just take longer. Gold believes that Steel is like him, impatient and wanting to use a direct approach. He suggests that he and Steel would make a good team. Later, Sapphire tells Gold that her and Steel's methods may be different, but they understand each other.

Sapphire analyses the yacht to determine where they are and the date within the time bubble. She also takes time back a couple of times. Including to rescue Gold and prevent her own death.

Steel says he could easily break down the cabin door but the noise would attract attention. He later does this "off camera". Steel also easily knocks Richard out (with Sapphire expressing concern that he may have hit the man too hard).

Gold is present as his skills might be needed on a yacht, but he's still in Sapphire and Steel's bad books for his reckless actions in *The Passenger*. Here, he uses his affinity with

vehicles to prevent the yacht's engines from propelling the boat.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

Most of the audios are understandably more "talky" than the TV stories, which tended to show rather than explain. *Perfect Day* is one of the more obvious examples of this, and the GM could aim for something less "conversational" in the running of a game based on it, perhaps leaving explanations less cut and dried.

This is a very traditional *Sapphire & Steel* story of the Base-Under-Siege type and would make a good introductory assignment for players new to *Sapphire & Steel*. Taking the Captain's form allows the splinter of Time to be unusually talkative and capable of charm, threats, reasoning and deceit.

Half of this story is about identifying and obtaining the trigger. In the audio, the ship in a bottle is obvious as soon as it's seen, so perhaps in a game there should be other possible triggers as red herrings among the wedding gifts (which aren't mentioned in the audio). Once secured, smashing the bottle is simple. But is there anyone inside it who would be killed? Maybe the player characters need to enter it to check… And even if not, can they be certain that smashing the bottle will destroy the splinter of Time and not release it?

It's worth remembering that whenever time resets itself (at 03:00 every morning), although the humans are all transported back to where they were at that time every previous night, the elementals and Time are unaffected.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Gold:** An elemental agent with an affinity with vehicles. Stats for Gold are provided on page 195.
- **Lydia Holloway:** Jennifer's mother. A former model. Wealthy, vocal and overly protective of her daughter.
- **The Captain:** In reality a splinter of Time. The real captain is trapped on the model ship, his mind broken.
- **Richard Charles Muldoon:** The groom. Still in love with Jennifer after living eight years of the same day with her.
- **Jennifer Louise Holloway:** Jen, the bride. Her love for Richard is still strong. Pregnant with their son, Nicholas.
- **James Muldoon:** The groom's younger brother and best man. In love in Jen and jealous of Richard. Realises he made a mistake by choosing to remain on the yacht, but it's too late to leave.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- A boat in the middle of the ocean is already isolated even without the addition of a time bubble. But an assignment to a stricken submarine on the seabed would provide added claustrophobia.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING HOUR

PUBLICATION

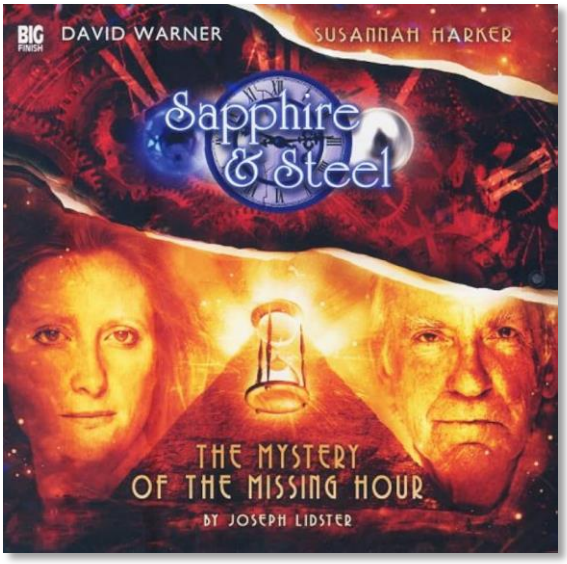
Released on CD in May 2007; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Two* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

Arthur Travers narrates a tale set in Egypt when he was a young man. At 8pm on December 3rd, 1926 at the Cairo Hilton, Arthur's adoptive father Major Cornelius Haute introduces him to Mr Shuffle. On the stage of the hotel dining room, the MC announces Sixpence, who sings *What's the Matter, Fido?* The Major explains to Arthur that this is the sterling and steadfast Mark "The Steel Man" Shuffle, while the woman on stage is his wife, the beautiful and mysterious Sixpence: Sixpence of Soho, Queen of Shaftesbury Avenue. Together they are Shuffle and Sixpence (though the listener will recognise their voices as those of Sapphire and Steel).

Arthur's narration now introduces the characters: Major Cornelius Haute, who has financed young Arthur's archaeological expedition; his beautiful and striking wife, Lady Marjorie; sweet, pure and innocent Jane Manners, the Major's secretary; their ever so humble Irish maid, Betty; and Arthur himself.

Arthur was born in 1902 to the Right Honourable Stephen and Ruby Travers, and orphaned in 1912 when his parents died on the *Titanic*. Major Haute, his father's business partner, took Arthur in and treated him as his own. Arthur was a quiet child except whenever a conversation turned to history, with which he was obsessed. As a young man, he believed that he had discovered the location of a forgotten pharaoh's burial chamber. Betty warned him of the pharaoh's curse, but the Major was fascinated with what Arthur told



him and, before long, the entire family was on its way to Cairo.

At the time, Arthur didn't realise that the Major and Lady Marjorie's marriage was on the rocks, and that the Major was sleeping with his secretary, Jane, while Lady Marjorie took numerous lovers.

In Cairo, the party is met at the port by the handsome and muscular local guide Ranjit, who is mute, having had his tongue torn out years ago. Not far away, Shuffle and Sixpence have also arrived in Cairo.

At the hotel, Lady Marjorie tells Arthur she would like him to find a wife, but he says he's perfectly happy with his life. Nevertheless, she has her eye on matching him with Jane. Arthur finds that his hotel room adjoins that of Jane, who says she would prefer the connecting door kept unlocked for reasons of safety.

While the party relaxes in and around the hotel's pool on the first evening, Jane takes the opportunity to flirt with Arthur. But when Arthur makes his excuses and goes back inside, she begins chatting up Ranjit instead. Inside, Arthur bumps into the maid Betty, who gets in

a flap as she swears she just saw him upstairs.

Later, at dinner, the group discusses the plans for the expedition, and Arthur intends to take Ranjit to the site to help with the digging. But Jane soon begins to feel unwell and retires to her room just as a stranger approaches their table and asks the time: it's twelve minutes to eight. Lady Marjorie feigns tiredness and also retires, leaving Arthur and the Major (Betty being too humble to dine with her employers).

Upstairs, Jane welcomes somebody into her room. But a few seconds later she is dead, her neck broken!

In the dining room, the Major introduces Arthur to Mr Shuffle, in a scene the older Arthur narrated in the story's introduction. But this time, Sixpence isn't announced by the MC as proceedings are interrupted by a scream. It is Betty, who has discovered the body of Jane. It's a good job that Shuffle and Sixpence, the most famous amateur detectives in London, are here! Laughing together, they realise they've just been assigned!

Betty is hysterical and has to be led away. Before she finally goes, she rants about heathen creatures just using them for sport. The MC informs the guests of the murder and asks for calm. He says he intends to call the police, until Shuffle announces that they will not be needed. Everyone is relieved that Shuffle and Sixpence are here, and the evening's jolly entertainment continues.

Soon, Arthur and the Major are in Jane's room with Shuffle and Sixpence, who seem to revel in the experience. Sixpence comments that wherever they go, death seems to follow. There's a lot of blood, and Arthur believes that Jane was stabbed with the nearby remains of a bottle of Champagne. But Shuffle and Sixpence point out that she was first strangled by somebody incredibly strong. A page torn from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has been placed in Jane's hand. Sixpence reads a passage which has been circled in the victim's blood. It concerns how Dracula sends large, fat flies with steel and sapphire on their wings. It's a clue, but why has it been left? The Major and Arthur wonder if the murderer could have been a vampire, but Shuffle and Sixpence both laugh at the notion before suggesting they all retire to the bar. As they go, Sixpence notices the adjoining door to Arthur's room. After they have gone, somebody enters Jane's room while whistling *God Save the King*.

The Major returns to his room and tells Lady Marjorie of Jane's murder and that Shuffle and Sixpence are investigating. The Major suggests that the detectives should not be told about his affair with Jane as they might then suspect him. Or if they realise that Lady Marjorie knows about the affair, they might suspect her. They agree not to say anything about it.

Later, Shuffle and Sixpence survey their suspects in the hotel bar. They both love this and each other! Time seems to stutter, and Shuffle senses something wrong, which is odd because he doesn't usually feel the heat. They decide to question the suspects using the good cop/bad cop technique.

Shuffle and Sixpence address the assembled group, but Betty soon mentions the curse of the pharaoh's tomb. She hints that Ranjit might know more about it and claims that he's had his tongue cut out to prevent him confessing. Ranjit tries to tell them something, but they don't understand. Arthur is told that

he can't start his excavations while the murder is being investigated.

As the discussion continues, there's an odd moment as Lady Marjorie fluffs a word, then apologises and corrects herself. The hotel MC interrupts to inform Shuffle that he has a telephone call from Dr Lipscombe, who has examined the body. Shuffle takes the call and learns something very interesting and quite impossible, but he won't tell Sixpence what it is in front of the suspects.

Shuffle suggests leaving the questioning until the morning, and they all take their partners for the next dance. Arthur takes to the floor with Ranjit, leaving Betty who accuses somebody of having committed the murder, claiming to have seen it with her own eyes.

Time seems to stutter again as the MC announces a request from a Mr Silver for Shuffle and Sixpence. They don't recognise the name, and Sixpence comments on it being an odd one. She doesn't like the song that Mr Silver requested for them, *Get Out of My Head*. Shuffle is taken unwell, and the couple return to their room to wait for dawn. The narrator has to repeat that Shuffle and Sixpence are waiting for the next day several times before the song finally stops and the scene ends.

The following day, Lady Marjorie and Arthur greet each other. Seemingly a different, more confident man, Arthur takes a sensual interest in his adoptive mother's pearls, quoting the *Full Fathom Five* stanza from *Ariel's Song* in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which includes the line "*Those are pearls that were his eyes*." He's no longer sure about his archaeological dig as he now doesn't think it's a good idea to look into old things.

Arthur leaves as Shuffle arrives to question Lady Marjorie. He's still feeling a little unwell but asks what happened last night. Meanwhile, Sixpence is in the hotel grounds asking the same of the Major. Between them, they relate the events leading up to Betty's scream. Their accounts differ as to Jane's character, with

Lady Marjorie describing her as promiscuous and the Major saying she was virtuous. They both agree that she retired to her room at twelve minutes to eight. The Major says that after his wife also retired, he didn't see her again until after he had seen Jane's body. Lady Marjorie was reading a book titled *The Abandoned Lady*, but didn't hear a thing even though Jane's room was nearby and a Champagne bottle was smashed. Shuffle momentarily hears Sixpence talking to him inside his head, confusing him, and the questioning of both suspects comes to an end.

The Major and Lady Marjorie exchange notes. Arthur wanders over and is back to his usual introverted personality. Lady Marjorie confronts him about his earlier behaviour in the bar, but he denies he has been there this morning. He recalls Betty saying something similar about seeing him upstairs yesterday, which also couldn't have happened. When Arthur has left, the Major and his wife realise they have a problem. They mention somebody who has died but is now somehow alive…

Shuffle and Sixpence discuss their interrogations. Shuffle says there's something odd about this case, but they are interrupted by the MC who tells them that there has been another murder: Dr Lipscombe has been poisoned by a lemon cheesecake. It smelled of almonds, so they immediately diagnose cyanide. When he was speaking on the telephone to the doctor last night, Shuffle mentioned Mrs Lipscombe's delicious lemon cheesecakes. Everyone then present heard him, so any one of them could have made a cheesecake and had it delivered to Lipscombe's rooms under the pretence it was from his wife! Shuffle says it must be to stop the doctor telling anyone else what he told Shuffle on the telephone. Sixpence discounts most of the suspects as being unable to make a cheesecake, leaving only Betty the maid!

Betty is in her room and she's very scared. She knows who killed Jane but nobody would believe her. And the killer knows that she knows. She has to get out of Cairo! She packs and leaves the hotel.

Arthur arrives in the bar and meets Shuffle and Sixpence. They bring him up to speed on their theory about Betty as the MC rushes up to say that Betty has fled. But Arthur doesn't understand why she would have left the page from *Dracula* as a clue. After a brief thought, Shuffle declares Betty to be psychotic and they order Champagne to celebrate. Arthur is still unsure though as it doesn't make sense. Sixpence points out that if it wasn't Betty, they would have to find another murderer. Shuffle adds that Arthur has a good motive. The detectives claim that he was in love with Jane, and lovers like to play games. Shuffle demonstrates by placing a hand around Arthur's neck and squeezing. Arthur begins to choke before Shuffle lets him go. The boy makes his excuses and leaves, while Shuffle and Sixpence agree to contact the police.

Outside, Arthur heads to the poolside to think alone. He's practically delirious and isn't feeling well. He undresses to swim, hoping to cool himself down, but somebody wolf-

whistles at him from the foliage.

In the hotel reception, Shuffle and Sixpence are checking out when they are spotted by Lady Marjorie. Shuffle notices that people keep saying where they are, which rooms they are in, as if stating the obvious. Lady Marjorie asks to speak to Sixpence in the bar, leaving Shuffle waiting in the reception area.

Upset, Arthur dives into the pool as somebody approaches whistling *God Save the King* in a slow, sinister fashion.

In the bar, Lady Marjorie confides in Sixpence that she doesn't think Betty killed Jane. She says there's someone else, someone who's dangerous, someone they thought was dead but who isn't.

In the reception area, Shuffle is no longer alone as somebody enters whistling *God Save the King*, even though the whistler at the poolside is also still there watching Arthur. It's the Major, who is carrying a parcel that the MC asked him to give to Shuffle. Inside is a murder mystery novel.

At the poolside, Arthur is frightened as he knows that the unseen person is right behind him. The whistling recommences very close.

Lady Marjorie scoffs at Sixpence's suggestion that the dangerous man she is talking about is Ranjit, and Sixpence becomes angry at being called stupid. She reveals the impossible thing that Dr Lipscombe told Shuffle on the telephone, that although Jane Manners left the dining table at twelve minute to eight, the doctor's examination revealed that she died over an hour before that. For someone to do that, they'd need to be able to control time, and that's crazy. It's the Mystery of the Missing Hour!

At the poolside, the mysterious man introduces himself as Frederick Travers, Arthur's long lost twin brother who looks exactly like him. He pushes Arthur into the pool.

ARTHUR TRAVERS

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Knowledge 4 (AoE, History, Archaeology), Science 1

TRAITS
Doppelganger - Frederick
Eccentric (Minor) – Introverted
Insatiable Curiosity
Special – Fictional Character: Only exists in the fiction of the radio play, in which he's compelled to act in the clichéd manner described in the script (not the same as Literally by the Book)

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 6

Shuffle insists that the Major read out the title of the book from the parcel. It's *The Passenger* by Philip Gold. Shuffle gasps the names Silver, Gold and Sapphire. Looking through the book, the Major summarises the plot as being about two detectives on a train, but then realises it's a science fiction story about two inhuman investigators instead. Shuffle becomes more and more upset as the Major describes the beings as aliens or angels. But the narrator cuts in before he can say their names. On the verge of panic, he decides to stop things there…

LADY MARJORIE HAUTE

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 3, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Attractive
Dark Secret (Major) – Her promiscuity
Distinctive
Silver Spoon
Special – Fictional Character: As Arthur
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

MAJOR CORNELIUS HAUTE

AWARENESS	**2**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Fighting 1, Knowledge 1, Marksman 3, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Dark Secret (Major) – Affair with Jane
Military Rank (Major x3)
Special – Fictional Character: As Arthur
Wealthy (Major)

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

The narrator resumes with young Arthur in the hotel pool, where Frederick is talking about the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912.

Indoors, Lady Marjorie asks Sixpence about her travels and the murders they find wherever they go. But the MC interrupts to tell them of another murder. This time it's Major Cornelius, and Shuffle has also been stabbed and been taken back to his room. He's unconscious so Sixpence will need to solve this one by herself. Sixpence has the impression her husband had a book, but the MC says there wasn't one.

Frederick tells Arthur that he was on the *Titanic* with their parents. He claims they were murdered, as the people who wanted them dead knew the ship would sink, having been told by someone who could see the future.

Sixpence checks on Shuffle in their hotel room. He briefly comes round but struggles to speak before falling unconscious again.

Arthur and Frederick enter Lady Marjorie's room to find her sleeping. She wakes and tells Arthur that the Major has been murdered. As she notices Frederick, Arthur asks why she never told him he had a brother. Frederick produces tickets for the *Titanic*'s maiden voyage in the names of Major Cornelius and Lady Marjorie Haute. Lady Marjorie claims they decided not to go and gave the tickets to Arthur's parents. They also bought an extra ticket for Frederick, but Arthur was ill and was

JANE MANNERS

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 1, Knowledge 1

TRAITS
Attractive
Dark Secret (Major) – Her promiscuity
Obsession (Major) – Men!
Special – Fictional Character: As Arthur

TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

left behind. Suddenly, Betty enters and claims that she can shed some light on all this.

The narrator says that Sixpence comes to the realisation that her husband will never regain consciousness and decides to go to the hotel bar. But before she can leave, Shuffle wakes, to the narrator's consternation. He is feeling better and draws his wife to him, seemingly to attempt telepathic contact. The narrator interrupts to remind him that Shuffle knows of his wife's dark secret and urges that he shouldn't make her angry, especially not in his weakened state. Shuffle stops his attempt.

But they still have the murders to investigate. Except that Sixpence happily sings that they are themselves the killers: "*Shuffle and Sixpence the time-travelling murderers!*" Shuffle adds "*with Sapphire and Steel on their heels!*", but Sixpence doesn't know what he means. Shuffle curtly stops her singing. Of course they're the murderers, but they can't let anyone know that. They have to play their parts and be the detectives.

Once Betty has been introduced to Frederick, she says that it's time the truth came out. Lady Marjorie now takes over the narration of what happened many years ago.

London, August 23rd, 1911. The Major and Lady Marjorie are looking forward to their voyage on the *Titanic*, but they are interrupted in the street by an Irishwoman, Betty, who warns them that the ship will sink. She claims to be the second daughter of a second daughter and to have the second sight. If they sail on the ship, they will die!

Back in 1926, Betty has come back to the Hilton to make sure the truth is told, and Shuffle and Sixpence have also arrived and heard the end of the tale. The Hautes took Betty on as their maid and gave their tickets for the *Titanic* to the Right Honourable Stephen and Ruby Travers, Arthur's parents. But Arthur was ill with scarlet fever and couldn't sail with the others, so the Hautes took him in. But Lady Marjorie insists that she didn't murder Jane, even though the secretary had discovered the truth. Frederick also denies it, and Betty says she didn't kill Dr Lipscomb with the poisoned cheesecake either. And who killed Major Haute? And what has happened to Ranjit? So many questions, at which point Shuffle interjects that he has the answers! It is time for the denouement, so they move to the bar.

The narrator, the much older Arthur Travers, adds that his parents were murdered by the two people who had masqueraded as his loving guardians. The two people who masqueraded as… human!

In the bar, the group is joined by Ranjit, and Shuffle begins his explanation. During this, he

mentions a case in which they found Sixpence's voice recorded on an old wax cylinder, but Sixpence doesn't remember it. Or the time they stopped a serial killer at Penryth Point lighthouse, or when they helped Jennifer Sowersby. Shuffle says that the first important clue was Sixpence's reaction to Arthur's reaction, almost as though he wasn't human. He also mentions the murder of Major Haute, and Lady Marjorie's callous, dismissive reaction to it. In fact, Shuffle says that she was to be the next victim, to be murdered by Sixpence when she worked out that Shuffle and his wife were the killers. Sixpence is shocked that Shuffle has revealed this!

The narrator intervenes to say that at this point the real killer confesses. Frederick owns up, claiming he was having an affair with Jane, but Shuffle dismisses this as wrong. Ranjit also tries to confess, but again Shuffle says no. The narrator steps in but is quickly silenced by Shuffle as this is his scene! He points out, that for one of London's top amateur detectives, Sixpence isn't actually very bright, and of course, it was Sixpence who told him that they were the killers.

But the real mystery is when and where they are. Shuffle says that his partner would normally be able to tell him. But because of her empathic nature, she has been completely absorbed into whatever this place is.

Shuffle also points out that everyone speaks in a very stilted, stereotypical manner, and that none of their reactions are natural. Their affections for each other change in each scene; there is no love here. Shuffle has realised that none of them are actually real. They are all like stock characters in a cheap, poorly written murder mystery who keep describing where they are, what they are doing and who they are with. Lady Marjorie keeps getting things wrong or even forgetting her lines and needs to be prompted. Nobody can describe Dr Lipscombe as he doesn't exist, nor Ranjit as he's only the sound effect of his clicking attempt at speech.

BETTY

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 3, Ingenuity 2, Presence 2, Resolve 2, Strength 2
SKILLS: Craft (Cooking) 2, Medicine 1
TRAITS: Eccentric (Minor: Superstitious), Know Your Place, Lower Class, Precognition, Psychic, Screamer!, Special – Fictional Character (as Arthur)
TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 2

RANJIT

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 3, Ingenuity 3, Presence 1, Resolve 3, Strength 4
SKILLS: Athletics 3, Fighting 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 3
TRAITS: Attractive, Marginalised, Mute, Special – Fictional Character (as Arthur, but actually just a sound effect)
TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 2

FREDERICK TRAVERS

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 4, Ingenuity 3, Presence 3, Resolve 3, Strength 4
SKILLS: Athletics 2, Convince 2, Fighting 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3
TRAITS: Dark Secret (Major: Believed to be dead), Doppelganger (Arthur), Special – Fictional Character (as Arthur)
TECH LEVEL: 4
STORY POINTS: 4

THE CREATURE

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**N/A**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Craft (Soundscapes) 6, Marksman 2, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Senses – Can "see" in soundscapes
Hypnosis (Major)
Immaterial
Impulsive
Invisible (Special Bad)
Natural Weapon (Major) – Killer Sound: 6(3/6/9) damage, either directed or Area Effect (3D6 metre radius)
Psychic
Psychic Illusions – Mainly sound (see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p40)
Telepathy
Uncreative (Minor) – Requires Stephen
Vortex

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 8

Arthur and Frederick are voiced by the same person. Betty isn't really Irish and when she drops her accent is revealed to also be Jane. To top it all, there only seems to be one man working at the Cairo Hilton, the MC, who doubles up as concierge, manager and whatever other roles are needed.

Shuffle tells his partner that she isn't Sixpence. They are all trapped in a radio play, and not a very well written one. The biggest clue is also the identity of the murderer. Only the narrator is real, and Shuffle reveals he is called Stephen Bunnings. Shuffle finally says that his own real name is Steel! The incidental music rises in a crescendo before cutting off.

STEPHEN BUNNINGS

ATTRIBUTES: Awareness 3, Coordination 2, Ingenuity 3, Presence 3, Resolve 2, Strength 4
SKILLS: Convince 2, Craft (Writing) 3, Knowledge 2
TRAITS: Dependency (Minor: Alcohol), Enslaved
TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

In a recording studio, there is a delay due to a technical problem. The sound is disrupted as if conversations are spliced together incorrectly and tracks overlaying each other, with actors chatting, the director resetting a scene, credits being narrated, and behind it all a deep, inhuman voice chuckling. The cast and crew notice it and wonder if it's interference. Amid a rising chaos of noise, the writer, Stephen Bunnings shouts that he is so sorry, and everything echoes and fades away.

The silence is broken by Steel's voice asking if anyone can hear him, if anyone is listening to this radio play. Somebody whistles *God Save the King* slowly. Sixpence speaks up and says that she can feel Sapphire somewhere inside herself. Steel tells her that she has to give into her, but Sixpence suspects he wants her to die so that Sapphire can live. Steel points out that they don't seem to have a physical form. He contacts Sapphire telepathically, which Sixpence can also hear. Sixpence realises that she doesn't matter and Sapphire breaks free.

They are in absolute darkness. Sapphire scans where they are and says it's December 4th, 1926, and January 3rd, 1987, and February 2nd, 2007. They are in the Cairo Hilton, and in a London recording studio, and somewhere else she can't make out. She senses something metal, a mirror. Steel reiterates that they're trapped in a radio play.

Shuffle calls out for Stephen Bunning. A woman replies. It's Sarah Douglas, the actress who was playing Lady Marjorie. Because of the darkness, she believes that there's been a power cut at the recording studio. Sapphire tells Steel that Sarah is dead.

Shuffle again calls for Stephen Bunnings. This time, a boy's voice replies, giggling about a monster. Sarah thinks it's Ian Hallard, the actor playing the younger Arthur and Frederick, but the elementals don't think it's even human. Other voices join in, the other actors. Sapphire says they're all dead, and they notice that the voices include their own. The boy's voice returns, telling them they're his toys, but they're broken.

Finally, Stephen Bunnings' voice speaks up, and the boy calls him his father, at which Bunnings sobs. Sapphire and Steel keep him talking to locate him, and Bunnings says that he killed everyone and all because of a stupid play. The boy's voice says that he can show them instead of telling them what happened.

The Capital Palace Theatre, January 3rd, 1987. Bunnings was getting ready to go out and borrowed a suit from the costume cupboard. His own reflection started talking to him. It said it was here to give him what he wanted: immortality, for his plays to be remembered. The reflection could make that happen. He just has to come with it. Bunnings refused at first, but the reflection was persuasive. It could make him happy (without recourse to alcohol for the first time in a long time) if he left his wife and son. Bunnings speculated that if his plays became famous, they might even be proud of him. The reflection took that as agreement and Bunnings vanished just before his son, Arthur, walked in to find him gone.

Sapphire explains that the creature in the mirror brought Bunnings forward to 2007 to have his play recorded as an audio drama, so that it would live on forever. The creature, the boy's voice, speaks up. It brought him to 2007 rather than any earlier year when CDs existed because of Sapphire and Steel's meeting with Arthur Bunnings in 2006, its knowledge of that being a paradox in itself. It wants to break time and cause chaos. Sapphire explains that it's a creature from outside time, and she realises that it's only a child. When Sarah interrupts, the creature destroys her.

Bunnings is horrified that the creature has killed people because it has become bored with them. He realises that he is the real reason people have died. The creature taunts him about not being loved by his wife and son.

Sapphire says they can defeat the creature by stopping playing its game and ignoring it. The creature tries to persuade them to play with it again. Focussing on Sapphire, it recreates Sixpence singing *What's the Matter, Fido?* on the Cairo Hilton stage. When she doesn't respond to it, it starts killing the actors. Bunnings wants to stop it, but Sapphire insists they're already dead and are just sounds now.

Eventually, the creature becomes bored and departs, leaving Sapphire, Steel and Bunnings trapped in this realm of sound. Sapphire suddenly realises that, unlike the others, Bunnings isn't dead. Steel tells him to focus on something real, on his son Arthur. Bunnings does so, but nothing happens. Sapphire

realises that when she sensed metal and a mirror, she was detecting a CD. They aren't trapped in a fiction. They were fractured into multiple echoes and distributed. They are trapped in a compact disc, and that when the CD ends, they will cease to exist. There are thousands of discs with other echoes of them on, and they will all die when those discs stop playing.

Sapphire and Steel could reach out to the other fragments of themselves to get themselves out. But Bunnings is still alive and they can't take him. If they get out, he will remain and die. Except that Sapphire reasons that if they and all their fragments focus on his son Arthur and the Capital Palace Theatre, they could get Bunnings out and return him to 2007 rather than 1987 to avoid any paradox.

Sapphire, Steel and Bunnings all concentrate, and Bunnings' voice vanishes from the CD. The elementals concentrate on themselves and it seems to work at first. But Sapphire and Steel remain trapped and they can no longer sense the other echoes of themselves. They're gone and there's no way out. Sapphire and Steel are trapped again… until the CD ends and they die.

TRIGGERS

There is no physical trigger, but Stephen Bunnings' desire for his writing to be remembered is what enabled the creature to latch onto him.

IRREGULARITIES

The creature is stated as being from outside time. Does this mean that it is not from the corridor of Time but from somewhere else? When it first talked to Stephen Bunnings in the mirror, it expressed fascination with linear time, implying that it was not previously familiar with the concept.

The creature is only a child and behaves immaturely. It is easily bored and just wants to play with its "toys". It needed Stephen Bunnings, a writer, to provide it with ideas for scenarios to play with. In this regard, it seems much like the Land of Fiction, which requires the imagination of an organic mind, or the Gods of Ragnarok, who need constant entertainment.

The creature can create soundscapes to trap people in. It can also use sound to destroy people, both in the real world and within its fictional ones. It can influence the minds of its victims to adjust their memories and perceptions to match the fiction, forcing them to play the roles it requires. Although it's from outside time and isn't familiar with its linear nature in our dimension, it can travel through time, having transported Stephen Bunnings from 1987 to 2007 for its purposes.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire and Steel spend much of this story as 1920s husband-and-wife investigative duo Shuffle and Sixpence, clearly inspired by Agatha Christie's similarly married detective couple Tommy and Tuppence, who first appeared in the 1922 novel *The Secret Adversary*. Like Tuppence, Sixpence is the more charismatic and intuitive of the pair, while Shuffle shares Tommy's single-mindedness and focus on the job at hand. Despite the murders they are investigating, they laugh and share jokes as if it's all just a bit of fun, and at times they seem to be the killers.

As Shuffle and Sixpence, Sapphire and Steel have no knowledge of their real nature nor their powers. Their Attributes and Skills remain as per their character sheets from *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* But until she regains her memory, Sixpence only has access to the following traits: **Attractive, Brave, Charming** and **Empathic**, plus she gains **Amnesia (Major)** and **Eccentric (Major: Psychotic)**. Shuffle only has **Armour, Brave** and **Weakness**, plus **Amnesia** and **Eccentric**. They lose the latter two new traits if they start to break through the creature's mental influence

(by resisting its Hypnosis at crucial points).

When Sapphire's memories begin to wake within Sixpence, she says to Steel "*You never feel anything. No passion, no… nothing*." To which Steel replies that they don't have time for that.

Sapphire comments that Steel remembering Stephen Bunnings' son Arthur (from *Water Like a Stone*) is unlike him, to which he replies that it must be something he picked up off her.

When Steel objects to Sapphire's suggestion that they risk their lives to rescue Stephen Bunnings, Sapphire says "*There is only one Steven Bunnings. There will always be a Sapphire and Steel*." In the subsequent story, *Second Sight*, a new Sapphire and Steel have indeed been assigned to ensure this continuation.

Although Sapphire and Steel cannot access their powers for most of the story, Steel demonstrates his unusual strength by choking Arthur. After they revert to their real selves, they regain their abilities, and Sapphire analyses their whereabouts to determine when and where they are, and that the others trapped on the CD are just sounds, the real people having been killed in the recording studio (except for Stephen Bunnings, who the creature needs to keep alive). They are unable to just teleport out of the CD trap without joining minds with their other splintered selves (requiring Awareness + Resolve rolls).

Sapphire's empathic nature works against her in this story, as she's totally absorbed by her role as Sixpence, even to the extent of being one of the killers and willing to murder again (and having a -4 penalty on rolls to resist the creature's influence). Steel being less susceptible to imagination is the one to break free.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is another story in the Transients War story-arc, though only indirectly and it only becomes apparent in retrospect when the transient beings take advantage of Sapphire and Steel being trapped (see *Second Sight*).

With the story's period setting, the *Sapphire & Steel* theme music has been reworked to resemble that of a detective drama set in the 1920s (in the style of *Poirot*, for example) and lacks the usual opening narration.

Throughout much of the story, characters describe where they are and what they are doing in much more detail than is natural, a clue that they are just fictions within a radio play. There are also references to some of Sapphire and Steel's previous assignments, such as mentions of the Capital Palace Theatre from *Water Like a Stone*, and a book titled *The Abandoned Lady*, the name of a play from the same audio. Sixpence sings the song *What's the Matter, Fido?*, which was written by Mrs P (Sapphire) in *Cruel Immortality*, and a 1920s-style arrangement of *Get Out of My Head* from *Daisy Chain* also features. The names Ruby Travers, Mr Silver and Philip Gold are all referenced, and "steel and sapphire" are mentioned in the passage from *Dracula*. Although some of this information comes from Stephen Bunnings, most of it is presumably dredged up from one or both of the elementals' subconscious memories. Steel also deliberately talks about some of their past assignments to try to jog Sixpence into remembering she's Sapphire.

In the final episode, several actors appear as themselves as well as their characters,

reinforcing the meta-fiction. To simulate the latter, the GM could have the players play versions of themselves within the game once they realise what is happening. Any actor NPCs should be fairly generic stereotypes so stats haven't been provided for the actual actors who appeared in the audios.

This story features Stephen Bunnings, the writer of the radio play that Sapphire and Steel are trapped in and its narrator. Stephen is the father of Arthur Bunnings from *Water Like a Stone*. This story reveals the events behind his disappearance on January 3rd, 1987 which Arthur had mentioned to Sapphire and Steel.

Like *Assignment V*, another story with the trappings of a murder mystery, this audio has a longer cast of characters than most in order to provide more suspects. In this case, they're all clearly defined, particularly as they're largely caricatures. There's also the inclusion of a narrator, who is eventually revealed to be the writer of the radio play. Naturally, the GM can act in this role and read out prepared sections of exposition, perhaps including one or two clues as to the meta-fictional nature of the setting, for example some obvious historical or factual errors, or contradictions of some of what has already taken place (with hurried corrections as though just noticing the mistakes).

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Arthur Travers:** Adopted son of Major Haute and Lady Marjorie. Shy and introverted, but with a love of history.
- **Major Cornelius Haute:** Arthur's adoptive father. Wealthy and having an affair with Jane.
- **Lady Marjorie Haute:** Wife of Major Haute. Their marriage is dead and Lady Marjorie routinely takes other lovers.
- **Jane Manners:** Major Haute's secretary. Widely thought to be innocent but actually highly promiscuous. The first murder victim.
- **Betty:** The Hautes' Irish maid. Parochial, superstitious and ever so humble, but has the second sight.
- **Ranjit:** Egyptian guide. Mute from having his tongue torn out years ago.
- **Frederick Travers:** Arthur's twin brother, believed to have died on the *Titanic*. Arthur is unaware of him.
- **Stephen Bunnings:** The writer of the radio play and its true narrator.
- **The creature:** A creature from outside time which has latched onto Stephen Bunnings and used him to create a fictional scenario to play with.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Although the Egypt of this story is totally fictional, the real thing would be an ideal location for Time to be able to break through. The ancient relics and obsession with immortality would provide plenty of perfect triggers.

GMING A WORLD OF SOUND

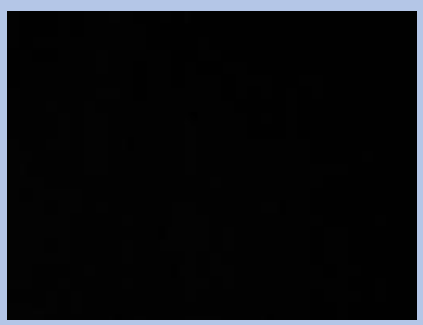
The realisation that the characters are trapped on a CD comes fairly late in the story, but it means that everything we've heard up to that point has also been in a dimension comprised only of sound. It's just that the characters don't realise this as they're following the script written by Stephen Bunnings, or at the very least improvising while remaining in character. They're not even aware that hearing is the only sense they're experiencing and that they are in absolute darkness and don't even have a physical form. The script has been filling all the missing information in for them, so that their minds are imagining the sights, smells, tastes and feels of the fictional world.

It's difficult for a GM to replicate this in a game without giving the game away, but there are a few tricks that can be employed to approximate it. Try not to use phrases like "you see" or "you're looking at". Instead, have an NPC describe what is around them in a manner that is conversational without being entirely realistic. So, instead of the more usual "You enter the hotel manager's office and see his desk with paperwork on it, a chair behind it, a filing cabinet to one side and a framed photograph of the King on one wall", have Major Haute (or whoever is with the PC) state "Ah, we're in the manager's office. Nice desk. I wonder what those papers on it are, and what's in that filing cabinet. Could there be a safe hidden behind the King's portrait?" Or if the PC is unaccompanied, have the narrator set the scene: "Steel enters the hotel manager's office and surveys its contents. A large desk and chair, a filing cabinet and a portrait of the King hanging on one wall. There are papers headed with the hotel's crest on the desk." In this way, the player gets the required information up front without the GM having to say that they "see" anything.

The device of a narrator is a useful one for this adventure. It can be used in a similar manner as above at the start of each new scene to describe where the characters are, who is present and what is around them. The players can be led to believe that the narrator is just a narrative conceit for the purposes of adding to the period drama feel, along with the stilted manners of the NPCs.

As the players come to realise that something is not right, as Steel does in the audio, they can make rolls to resist the creature from outside time's Hypnosis (Ingenuity + Resolve against the creature's Presence + Convince). Eventually, they will break free of its influence and become aware that they are in complete darkness - in fact, that hearing is the only sense they have.

Beyond this story, the revelation at the end of *Wall of Darkness* implies that every audio released in this series also takes place in the CD trap. But it's probably too much to ask of a GM to maintain the above methods for an entire campaign. Big Finish are themselves only able to get away with it because their stories are in the audio medium, so sound is the only information we receive. Even with a single story, slip-ups are likely to be made and the GM may inadvertently give out visual information. In the scheme of things, this doesn't matter too much and can be rationalised away with an explanation of the characters gaining subconscious clues from the sound environment or their brains making assumptions and filling in the blanks. If we were to be completely strict about it, this chapter shouldn't include any pictures, or maybe just black rectangles in their place. But the bottom line is to have fun with the story and the challenges it presents for imaginative roleplaying.



SECOND SIGHT

ADVISORY WARNING

Although Big Finish didn't give this story an advisory content warning, it contains references to stillbirth and infanticide.

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in March 2008; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Three* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

Mary has cleaned her house from top to bottom and muses that her neighbours avoid her out of embarrassment. She doesn't seem to hear a whispering noise in the background. Then her last few words begin repeating endlessly like a stuck record.

Not far away, Polly calls for Davey but there's no reply. The same eerie whispering sound rises to a crescendo. A clock stops ticking.

Later, Polly is still trying to find Davey and switches off the CD player that Mary's stuck voice is coming from. There is a knock at the door and she lets in a young couple who introduce themselves as Sapphire and Steel. They're not the Sapphire and Steel we're familiar with, but a younger, brasher couple with Australian accents. They're here to answer Polly's call for help.

Mary's monologue continues with her talking about her husband Richard's cancer.

Sapphire scans Polly's house and tells Steel that it's 18th Century and full of old furniture, with nothing from the 21st Century. Even a newspaper is dated March 14th, 1987. Polly has a pile of old papers she likes to read to ease the boredom. It's usually just her and Davey here, though there are others in the East Wing. Sapphire tells Steel that the East Wing was added in the 1950s, when the place was still a

hospital.

Polly tells the elementals that she last saw Davey an hour ago when she went down to the Bay to see the sunset. When she left the house, he was in his bedroom listening to music. Steel comments that the house is full of clocks, and Sapphire adds that none of them work. Polly explains they all stopped just before Davey disappeared. She also says that the house is haunted. She hasn't seen any ghosts but Davey has, and one time there was blood all over the larder floor. Sapphire scans it but gets nothing, so they go to look at Davey's bedroom.

Mary's monologue now mentions their baby but recalls that her husband, Richard, never saw it.

Polly becomes angry at Sapphire and Steel's questions and demands to know who they are. Steel explains about the dimension of Time that cannot be entered, but sometimes it tries to break into our dimension in places where the walls have grown weak. He suspects that Time has broken through and taken Davey.

In Davey's room, they find a CD player playing Mary's monologue and turn it off. Steel finds a stack of CDs but is unsure whether they are

relevant. Sapphire scans the player and determines that it was constructed in 1996 in Manchester, not far from here.

When Polly last saw Davey, he was sitting on the floor while she was standing in the doorway. Steel winds up the two clocks in the room and Sapphire puts a CD on. They feel something, a fracture, something trying to come through, reaching out to them. Several voices are heard faintly, one calling "Polly", with Mary's monologue continuing in the background. Polly smashes the clocks to stop the noise, angering Sapphire who shouts at her to get out of the room and stay out. After she's gone, the elementals both say they heard at least three voices. Steel wonders if the CD player is a trigger and unplugs it, but Sapphire suspects it's something else.

Mary talks about a girl she saw who's the spitting image of her mother. The faint voices return, one of them calling "Polly".

Polly explains that she first met Davey at the museum where they both work. Sapphire suddenly notices that the clocks are all ticking again, and a voice calling "Polly Pocket" is heard. Mary's monologue starts again and, without warning, Davey appears in the room.

Mary is now talking about when she declined counselling after the death of Richard, on the grounds of upholding moral standards. A little later, on the day she was made redundant from her job, she saw the girl who looked like her mother again. But the girl vanished before Mary could speak to her.

The following morning, Sapphire nails up the door to Davey's room. Nobody can sleep in there until this is all sorted out. Polly says she's going to stay with her friend Annie, who claims to have the second sight. She says Annie claims she's visited by a talking pig which can predict the future.

Mary is concerned about a stain on the carpet

that she can't get clean. She's disconnected the phone using scissors to stop it ringing and covered the upstairs windows with brown tape. She'll need to do the same downstairs when the trees thin in autumn. It becomes apparent that she's talking to someone who's been sitting in the same chair for the past three days and doesn't move or speak. Mary doesn't know how she got in as she'd locked the door, but she's no trouble. It's the girl who looks like Mary's mother. Mary says that her daughter would be twenty-five now if she'd lived, around the same age as the girl.

Steel hears the sound of a piano from somewhere in the house and goes to investigate, so Davey heads off to the museum. The elementals find the piano playing itself: their colleague Ruby has arrived.

At the museum, Polly has arrived in search of Davey but only finds Annie as it's also her home. There's a new waxwork, which Polly thinks is horrible. Annie feels unwell and has to sit while Polly reads the new waxwork's sign: "Mary Jean Reynold, née Clegg. Born December 12th, 1921." But Polly is upset and says it doesn't look anything like the real Mary. Polly knew her and says she was lovely, whereas the waxwork makes her look like a murderer! She becomes angry at Annie laughing at her comment and threatens not to come and visit her again.

Sapphire is angry at Steel for summoning Ruby, whom she considers to be one of the old guard and useless in the war against the transients. She points to Silver having been trapped in a Möbius strip: "*That's kindy stuff!*" Sapphire

and Steel have a row while Ruby looks on amused until she makes them aware that Polly has also gone.

Annie and Polly are also arguing, with Annie pointing out that Polly can't remember anything about her own past. Suddenly Annie gasps and collapses.

Ruby tries to take control, telling Sapphire that she wasn't summoned here by Steel but arrived of her own accord to clear up the mess they were undoubtedly about to make. Steel admits they haven't found much out yet, but Ruby determines they haven't even checked the CD that was playing when they arrived. When Steel tells her the date is 2008, Ruby switches on the radio and the newsreader announces it's August 31st and that Princess Diana has just died, making it 1997.

Annie tells Polly that August 31st, 1997 is the day that the pig foretold for her own death. Polly talks about the waxwork again, saying that she saw Mary take the pills that killed her. It took a week for her body to be discovered. Polly was there but nobody took any notice of her.

Ruby is still incredulous that Sapphire and Steel were unaware that the entire house, perhaps the entire village, has been shifted back over twenty years in time. It's perfectly possible that they've overlooked something else.

Annie is fading fast. She says that Polly is a very special little girl.

Ruby leads the other two to the village graveyard and shows them one of the stones: "David Henry Hawkhurst. Died 4th April 1908." Davey is a ghost and quite probably the trigger!

Mary says that she put a teddy bear in with her baby, but that she had forgotten something. After seeing Richard die of cancer and it then coming for her, she couldn't let her baby see it take her.

Ruby says that Davey might not be the only ghost; Polly might be another.

A little later, Ruby briefly hears the old Sapphire and Steel calling for her. The new Sapphire and Steel are helping her go through the old newspapers to try to find clues to what caused the time shift and the ghosts. Sapphire suggests just killing them, but Ruby tells her it's not that easy. Steel finds a newspaper item from 1955 about a baby girl kidnapped from a pram in this village. The baby was Polly Clegg, the daughter of Mary Clegg who was a cleaner at this house. Ruby finds a 1980 report of the death of Mary.

Mary says that she pretended her baby had been kidnapped from outside the supermarket. After a while, she even began to believe it herself, except that the baby was still under the floorboards. But unexpectedly, the operation to remove Mary's cancer was successful and she recovered. After that, Mary began to clean her house relentlessly, from top to bottom every day.

Polly returns to the house and tells the elementals she saw Annie at the museum but she died. Sapphire scans Polly but can't tell how old she is. She's not there, as if she doesn't exist. Polly is upset as Annie told her she's a ghost, or rather a wish fulfilment. Before she died, Annie told her to look at the waxwork of Mary again, and she read on the sign that she killed her little baby with a hammer and hid the body under the floorboards. The baby's name was Polly, so she and Davey are ghosts.

Davey has entered and overheard this, but he denies he's a ghost. Sapphire says that Davey is the same as Polly, a wish fulfilment, and he admits he was stillborn. Somewhere nearby, whispering voices start up again.

Ruby produces a music box she found in a cupboard. She opens it and it plays Brahms' *Lullaby*. Sapphire senses a shadow, and Polly sees Mary. They all hear Mary talking to her but she can't hear Polly talking back. Then Mary vanishes, taking Polly and Ruby with her, leaving a vision of her killing the baby Polly with a hammer.

Ruby tries to contact Sapphire and Steel telepathically, telling them she thinks she's in the East Wing. She and Polly now witness Mary taking the tablets to kill herself before they are returned to the other part of the house.

Steel has recognised Mary's voice as the one they heard on the CD that was playing when they entered Davey's room earlier. But that wasn't the CD Davey had been listening to when he vanished. He explains that he listens to CDs on his CD Walkman, but that the other CD player often plays by itself.

Ruby says that history is repeating itself. She reminds Sapphire and Steel that their old forms were trapped in a fiction on a CD. This time it's the other way around and the drama on the CD has become reality. The ghosts, the house and the village aren't real! The old Sapphire and Steel's voices are briefly heard again as the fissure between reality and fiction shifts.

The new Sapphire and Steel ask whether they are themselves real, but Ruby sidesteps the question. They discover that by boarding up the door to Davey's room, Sapphire has inadvertently created an impenetrable barrier between them and the fissure. Beyond the door, they can hear a recording of a voice.

Ruby uses her affinity with music to teleport beyond the barrier. She attempts to close the fissure by using a bit of Prokofiev, but this

SAPPHIRE

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 4, Knowledge 3, Subterfuge 3, Technology 1

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Alien Senses – Has a wide variety of senses
Attractive
Brave
Clairvoyance
Eccentric (Minor) – Limited understanding of or patience with emotions
Elemental Agent
Environmental (Minor) – Doesn't need to eat, drink or sleep
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Hypnosis (Minor)
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Precognition
Psychic
Psychic Training
Psychometry
Telepathy
Teleport
Time Manipulation – see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p12

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 6

doesn't work. Ruby again hears the old Sapphire and Steel trying to contact her. They tell her that they're trapped on all the CDs in Davey's cabinet. They've been working their way through his collection and explain that it was they who created the fissure as their way out, but the transient beings got there first. The transients drew a real person into the fissure and turned her life into a radio play, creating the wish fulfilments.

Outside the room, the new Sapphire and Steel hear somebody whistling *God Save the Queen* and then a girl's voice reciting *Here's a Little Choo-Choo Train*. They notice it's snowing outside despite it being August.

Steel tells Ruby to widen the fissure to allow them to get out, but Ruby is suddenly suspicious as the transients can take on any form. But Steel insists so Ruby agrees to do it.

The new Sapphire senses it's now December rather than August, then November. She and the new Steel hear a radio announcement from 1949 that the last traces of war-time gloom are being thrown off in Britain.

Ruby starts to widen the fissure, but it goes wrong. She needs some other music to help.

The new Sapphire and Steel realise that they're travelling back in time as they now hear a recording of the old Sapphire's voice that was made on a wax cylinder in 1892.

Ruby tries a different CD but just hears mocking laughter. She finds Davey's CD Walkman and uses the disc in that. A transient's voice taunts her that they're trapped forever. Through the door, Ruby asks the new Sapphire to anchor her.

Ruby isn't sure where she now is but thinks she's been there for about eight months. In the house, the new Sapphire and Steel are confronted by horsemen from the 15th Century, which Steel tries to hold back.

STEEL

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**6**

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 2, Fighting 3, Knowledge 1, Marksman 1, Science 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2, Technology 3

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Armour (5 points)
Attractive
Charming
Cold Steel – see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p13
Elemental Agent
Empathic
Environmental (Minor) – Doesn't need to eat, drink or sleep
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Telepathy
Teleport
Weakness (Minor) – Steel's Armour doesn't protect him against heat or fire

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 6

Finally, Ruby succeeds and the old Sapphire and Steel are brought back into reality. Steel promptly smashes Davey's collection of CDs

POLLY CLEGG

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Impulsive
Special – Fictional Character: Only exists in the fictional village created by the transients; she can appear and vanish at will, and will cease to exist once the CD collection and player are destroyed

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

and his player, finally closing the fissure.

Steel tells Ruby that their new counterparts will have to go. Their younger selves know what's going to happen to them and begin kissing. Sapphire says that they've embraced their humanity, but Ruby begins the process of dispatching them

The new Sapphire and Steel fade away. However, the old Steel produces a surviving CD which he takes with him as he, Sapphire and Ruby depart. Sapphire realises that the other Sapphire and Steel are on the disc, where they can have a continued existence of sorts.

TRIGGERS

Although there are other suspects, the triggers here are finally identified as Davey's collection of CDs and his CD player. Mary Clegg has been trapped in one of the CDs to anchor the wish fulfilments (that of her daughter Polly in particular). This is also preventing the fissure that Sapphire and Steel created from widening. Once the CDs and player are destroyed, the wish fulfilments will cease to exist.

IRREGULARITIES

Transient beings have taken advantage of Sapphire and Steel being trapped in a CD at the end of the previous story to ensure that they cannot escape. The transients are present in this story only as a mocking voice, though they also try to prevent the elementals' rescue by sending the new Sapphire and Steel back in time and summoning up a squad of 15th Century horsemen to use against them.

Polly and Davey aren't exactly ghosts and are instead described as wish fulfilments of lives

ANNIE

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**1**

SKILLS
Convince 2

TRAITS
Precognition
Psychic
Special – Fictional Character: As Polly
Weakness – Any stress or exertion requires Annie to make successful Resolve + Strength roll or take 1 point of damage

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 1

never lived. In fact, they're just fictions without any real existence and will vanish once the CD collection anchoring them is destroyed. They can come and go through the fissure.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND RUBY)

With Sapphire and Steel trapped in an audio CD at the end of the previous story, new versions of the elementals are introduced. The new Sapphire and Steel are younger, have Australian accents and use Australian figures of speech. When Steel is asked whether he's Australian, he replies that he's not but he may have been there once. Oddly, their personalities seem to have been swapped, with Sapphire being the more impatient and abrasive of the pair (Steel calls her a hard-ass), and Steel being more sensitive and empathic (though still tough). They are inexperienced and naïve. To complement this, this story also has a more modern arrangement of the opening theme and the narration is spoken by Ruby and the new Sapphire and Steel.

Ruby comments that the new Steel is like he was when she first met him and that she found the older, more cynical version charming.

Sapphire accuses Steel of being attracted to Ruby, while Steel replies that she's obviously attracted to Silver.

Sapphire has to have compact discs explained to her by Steel. She scans the house to determine its age but fails to realise that the entire village has been taken back in time by over twenty years. She also tries to scan Polly and Davey and determines that they aren't real. Sapphire acts as Ruby's anchor in the rescue of the older Sapphire and Steel.

Steel twists Davey's arm almost to breaking point to shut him up. He also has to hold off a number of 15th Century horsemen summoned by the transients, though quite how successful he is isn't made clear.

DAVEY HAWKHURST

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Subterfuge 2

TRAITS
Face in the Crowd
Special – Fictional Character: As Polly

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

The older Steel smashes Davey's CD player and CD collection with ease.

Ruby's arrival is heralded by her trick of getting a piano to play by itself. She uses music to help her rescue the older Sapphire and Steel and to close the fissure, much as she used music to focus her powers in *Water Like a Stone*. Once the older Sapphire and Steel have been rescued from the CD, the younger versions must be eliminated. It seems that only one version of each elemental can be allowed to exist at any one time. Does this indicate that they are artificial lifeforms, created and disposed of as needed by the governing authority? In a rare moment of compassion, Steel instead transfers the younger pair onto a CD so that they can continue to exist.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This story follows on from *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*, though a year seems to have passed for the older Sapphire and Steel (see below). It's another story within the Transients War story-arc. The new Sapphire mentions that the transients have trapped Silver in a Möbius strip. In *Zero*, it's revealed that he has managed to escape.

Having the usual players of Sapphire and Steel play new versions is a sneaky way to convince them that their old characters are permanently lost, before Ruby's arrival prompts their rescue.

Steel states that the date is March 13th, 2008 (which matches Sapphire's earlier reading of the age of the newspaper dated 1987). This means that around a year has passed since *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*. However, it later becomes apparent that the elementals are actually in 1997, with news reports of Princess Diana's death on August 31st.

Several elements from *Assignment I* are deliberately reused in this story, such as people disappearing, the boarding up of a room and the unexpected arrival of a third elemental.

There are several callbacks to previous stories, including the national anthem being whistled (from *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*), the voice of the girl reciting *Here's a Little Choo-Choo Train* (from *The Passenger*), a 1949 radio broadcast (from *Cruel Immortality*), a recording of Sapphire's voice from 1892 (from *All Fall Down*) and a music box that plays Brahms' *Lullaby* (from *Daisy Chain*).

Mary's monologue is a pastiche of Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads* with a hint of Hyacinth Bucket from *Keeping Up Appearances*. Although the elementals only hear snatches of it, the GM could read prepared extracts between scenes or whenever they enter Davey's room and the CD player is on.

The scenes at Annie's house-cum-museum are completely separate from the rest of the story in that the elementals don't ever go there or meet Annie. She's peripheral to the plot in any case, so much of this could be removed or reworked to be more central to a game adventure. The truth behind her talking pig remains unexplained but irrelevant as she's a fiction like the rest of the village.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Ruby:** An elemental agent with an affinity with music. See page 133 for Ruby's stats.
- **Pollyanna Elizabeth Clegg:** Polly, a wish fulfilment of a baby who was murdered by her mother, Mary Clegg. Appears to be an adult.
- **David Henry Hawkhurst:** Davey, a wish fulfilment of a person stillborn in 1908. Appears to be a young adult.
- **Annie:** Frail and elderly owner of a museum. West Indian accent.
- **Mary Jean Reynold, née Clegg:** Mother and killer of Polly; committed suicide in 1980. Only appears as a recorded monologue on a CD, having been trapped there by the transients.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Since *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*, the older Sapphire and Steel have been working their way through Davey's CD collection to try to get out of their trap. We know he has some *Tomorrow People* CDs (and maybe other science fiction dramas), so placing Sapphire and Steel in some of these would form an entertaining sub-arc.

REMEMBER ME

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in April 2008; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Three* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

On a windswept English pier, veteran comedian Eric Gurney is met by Kate Lambert, a runner for a TV crew hoping to interview him for a documentary about the history of British comedy. He says he hasn't seen anyone for hours. She shows him into the dressing room of the pier's theatre to wait then vanishes into thin air. Gurney hears the sound of an audience laughing then reacts in shock as he sees somebody he recognises.

A fun fair is operating when Sapphire and Steel arrive on the pier. They are here to investigate something that has arrived in winter in a closed music hall at the end of the pier. Sapphire can sense people inside, but it's hard to tell how many.

Inside the music hall, Kate is trying and failing to get a signal on her mobile phone when she hears the sound of an audience laughing.

Sapphire scans the pier and determines that it was built in 1894, the work of David Kettlety, a shipping magnate who wanted to give something back to the community. The Regal Music Hall came a year later and put on variety shows. But visitors drifted away when music hall became unfashionable and it closed down.

Inside, Kate is being tormented by the laughter.

Sapphire and Steel enter, and Sapphire immediately senses something wrong. Something happened when they came through the door, but she can't quite catch what. It slips away as she tries to look, as if the whole building is out of synch with them. Whatever it is is out of reach, but she warns that it's very powerful indeed. Steel heads for the auditorium

Kate is panicking as she tries to get out, but all the doors are locked.

Steel finds the auditorium empty, but Sapphire says it isn't, not really. She can sense people who should be here. She can feel their absence. By the stage, they see equipment left by a TV crew. It's been here less than a day, but the crew isn't here. A crew list indicates there should be seven of them, but Sapphire can't sense them in the building due to interference. Something took them, but she can't tell where. She points out that there is a lot of very new equipment in a very old building filled with very old fittings and furniture, which Steel says is practically gift-wrapped for "it".

Sapphire senses that none of the people on the crew list have any historical significance whatsoever. So why has it taken them? Suddenly, they hear Kate's cries from the direction of the foyer and go to her aid, opening a door to let her out. Sapphire telepathically tells Steel that she's twenty-six years old and one month pregnant. Kate

believes that they were responsible for locking her in, but Steel insists they're here to help. Kate tells them she's with the TV crew but she doesn't know where they are or what happened to her.

Kate goes to the auditorium to fetch the director, Colin, but finds he's not there. She now thinks Sapphire and Steel have done something to him and the others. Kate becomes hysterical until Steel shouts at her to be quiet. They realise that they are all trapped in the theatre as all the exits are now locked.

Kate tells the elementals that she last saw the crew about fifteen minutes ago. This was while Sapphire and Steel were still on the promenade, which means they arrived *before* the break-out. Steel says that this isn't possible. Kate tells him she had left Eric Gurney in his dressing room to get ready and was on her way back to fetch him when she heard the laughter. Steel goes to check the dressing room to see if Gurney is still there. In the corridor outside, he hears an audience laughing.

Sapphire asks Kate about the programme they are filming. It's about the history of British comedy, but Kate hadn't heard of Eric Gurney. Apparently, he did a lot of work in the '70s.

Steel finds Gurney in the dressing room. The comedian first assumes Steel is the director, then that this is all a practical joke for a hidden camera TV show. He mentions seeing special effects, and explains that he's heard the laughter and seen visions of people and personal things he won't expand on. Gurney angrily tells Steel about Kate vanishing about an hour ago after saying she'd only be five minutes. Steel becomes irritated with the bad-tempered Gurney and orders him to come with him as something dangerous is happening in this building and he may not survive the night. Steel spots Gurney putting a photograph in his bag, but the comedian won't say what it's of.

Elsewhere in the building, the sounds of people laughing at a Punch and Judy show are heard.

Sapphire is talking to Kate about what has happened when Steel returns with Gurney. Sapphire mentally tells Steel that Gurney is human and sixty-seven years old. Gurney is still irritable so Steel shouts at him to sit down and be quiet.

Sapphire and Steel confer. If neither Gurney nor Kate were taken, then "it" only took those in the auditorium. However, Steel tells Sapphire that Gurney saw Kate vanish. So it's possible she was taken but then rejected for some reason.

Steel asks Gurney who he is, making Gurney upset that Steel doesn't remember him from his TV sitcoms and gameshow appearances. He claims to have been a national treasure back in the day and is angry to think that the public have forgotten him.

Steel then asks Kate about her unborn baby, but she's wasn't aware that she's pregnant. Kate claims not to know who the father might be, but Steel presses her as the baby's genetic makeup might be a clue to what's happening here. Upset, Kate admits the father must be Dan, an ex who works in a bank.

Sapphire calls Steel off from his interrogation of Kate, so he returns to questioning Gurney. He asks about the interview and learns that this music hall is where he did a lot of his early work. Gurney takes offence at Steel's insinuation that he's a relic of the past.

It's beginning to feel cold, so Steel asks about the TV crew's generator and the theatre's junction box. He lifts up the heavy cables with ease and carries them away to connect them to the junction box. A little later, the lights come on in the auditorium.

Steel finds the prop room and contacts Sapphire to tell her it's full of potential triggers. But Sapphire doesn't think the trigger is an object. Steel hears the sound a distorted voice coming from a Punch and Judy booth. As he investigates, the prop room door locks itself and the circuitry blows, setting the room ablaze. He realises that it's trying to kill him!

Sapphire rushes to help Steel and Kate goes with her, leaving Gurney alone. Somebody enters and Gurney recognises it as his daughter, Tessa. A male voice answers, "*Yes, Daddy. It's your little girl. I've come back*."

Sapphire arrives at the prop room to find the door open and no fire, but Steel reacting as if there were. A force resists her entering, so she forces her way through with Kate holding her arm. Eventually she reaches Steel and pulls him out. The room returns to normal, but Steel's clothes are smoking and burnt.

Gurney continues to talk to the thing he thinks is his daughter, the Nostalgia. It warns him not to listen to Sapphire and Steel as they're bad people who want to hurt Tessa.

Steel tells Sapphire he could hear other things in the fire: explosions, babies crying, women screaming. The entity was attacking him with one particular fire. There were also the sounds coming from the Punch and Judy box. Steel realises that the distorted laughter and voice were those of Mr Punch, but Kate has only heard the audience laughing, which she says sounded like canned laughter. She admits she was scared by a Punch and Judy show when she was a child.

Sapphire sends Kate back to Gurney while she and Steel discuss what's happening. They realise that the entity is using events from the humans' pasts. Steel suggests that Sapphire make contact with it. She does and says that it seems angry. Suddenly the sprinklers start and begin to flood the room.

"Tessa" vanishes just as Kate arrives back in the auditorium. Gurney tells her he thought Steel was unpleasant to her. Kate hears the voice of the Nostalgia telling Gurney to ask her about Dan. He denies there's a voice but asks her the question.

Sapphire tries to maintain contact with the entity as the room fills with water. Against Steel's orders, she takes time back to before the sprinklers were set off to save themselves. Sapphire realises that the trigger is not the past but the events themselves, though distorted as though through a filter.

Kate tells Gurney that becoming pregnant was a mistake. Dan had split up with his girlfriend and needed somewhere to stay, but he didn't sleep on the sofa. Dan left as soon as his girlfriend phoned and they patched things up.

Steel plans to try to trap the entity. He tells Sapphire to go back and ask Gurney and Kate about their experiences with fire and water. When she has gone, the Nostalgia's voice appears in Steel's head. It tells him it wants to eat his mind and begins to strip it away, piece by piece. But Steel is defiant and it lets him go, telling him to leave now while he can or face

the consequences.

In the auditorium, Gurney sees somebody else from his past, a man called Michael from his showbiz years who was killed in a car crash. “Michael” tells Gurney that the country needs his comedy again, proper gags like the old days, and offers him a new TV series.

Sapphire enters and asks Gurney whether he has ever been in a fire. The Nostalgia’s voice instructs him not to tell her, so he denies he has. Sapphire doesn’t believe him. She scans him and reads that he was born during the Blitz, which is the information she was after.

Steel summons Sapphire to the foyer and tells her he saw the Nostalgia in his head. It looks like everyone on the planet at the same time and it wants food. But why did it not eat Gurney and Kate? Sapphire tells him that Kate nearly drowned in a reservoir when she was seven, and that Gurney was born in the Blitz. Perhaps the entity left them because it found them indigestible. Sapphire also says that Gurney’s manner has changed, as though it has already got to him. They need to focus on Kate.

Suddenly, the windows are smashed in by hordes of seagulls. Steel stays to try to fight them off, while Sapphire retreats back to the auditorium and gets Kate and Gurney to help her with chairs to barricade the doors.

With Steel safely back with the others, Kate admits that she didn’t like Hitchcock’s *The Birds* much. Steel points out that the attacks are only against himself and Sapphire, not Kate and Gurney. It’s using aspects of their past as weapons. But what’s special about them?

Sapphire asks Kate to talk them through her day step by step. Steel again has to tell Gurney to shut up and the comedian moves away a little in a huff. Kate tells them of her arrival early this morning and her meeting with Gurney on the pier. Then leaving him in his dressing room and hearing the laughter before Sapphire and Steel rescued her. But the times she gives only take the day up to one o’clock, whereas it must have been after six as it was already dark when Sapphire and Steel arrived. Kate can’t remember any missing time, but Steel insists she search her mind. She realises that if she tries to see the dressing room, something blocks her as if it’s been removed from her head. Sapphire deduces that memories have been taken from them. They’re what the entity is feeding on.

Sapphire and Steel take Kate to the dressing room to investigate where the blocks on her memory started. The Nostalgia again talks to Gurney, reminding him of the good old days. Another of Gurney’s late friends, his former partner Charlie Page, appears and tells him he could be famous again. He just has to ask.

In the dressing room, Sapphire asks Kate to remember this afternoon again. Kate pictures herself going to see Gurney, but she can’t open the door. Sapphire helps her and the door opens to reveal Gurney has had a stroke or something similar. He’s there but his mind has gone. Kate remembers that she then went to make a phone call, but nothing else before hearing the laughter and finding the doors locked. Steel pushes her to try again, but Kate

becomes angry and goes back to find Gurney.

Sapphire reasons that there can't have been an afternoon after all if Kate can't remember it even with the memory blocks removed. But Steel isn't convinced. How has Gurney recovered? Why did the entity leave him and Kate? Why doesn't Gurney remember having a seizure? Sapphire speculates that the entity replaced his memory of the attack rather than wiped it, so he doesn't realise his memories aren't complete. Steel then asks whether the entity could have changed Gurney's memories of his entire life rather than just one small section of them.

Gurney is still talking to "Charlie", who insists he could have his old life back. Other faces from his past appear and Gurney tells them he wants to be famous again!

Steel explains that the entity didn't steal this afternoon. The afternoon is happening right now. If memory relies on awareness, then by changing memories, the entity can change perception. They may be remembering that it's dark outside, whereas it could in fact still be daylight. It's what Sapphire sensed as they entered the theatre: the building wasn't out of time; it was them.

Kate arrives in the auditorium as Gurney is screaming "*Yes! Yes!*" repeatedly, confirming that he wants his old life again.

Sapphire and Steel realise that they're trapped in a memory. The Nostalgia didn't take the rest of the TV crew, it left them behind and took Gurney, Kate, Sapphire and Steel. Steel asks Sapphire to hold time to stop the present becoming the past, so they can see what is really happening now. She tries and time slows to a stop but only briefly.

Sapphire was able to see the dressing room they are in but it was daytime. One of the TV crew was there, but Gurney wasn't. The entity is altering memory, not the real world. Gurney is in the auditorium in the memory so he's also in the auditorium in the real world. Gurney can be in a room with real people as much as Sapphire and Steel are also in a room with real people. The real people can see them, even touch them, but they forget them a second later effectively making them not there. Sapphire and Steel realise they're trapped.

In the auditorium, Kate is surrounded by chaotic noise caused by the Nostalgia. It instructs her to sleep and she does. It tells Gurney that they're ready to record his show now, but he needs to deal with his critics first. They're going to eat Sapphire and Steel!

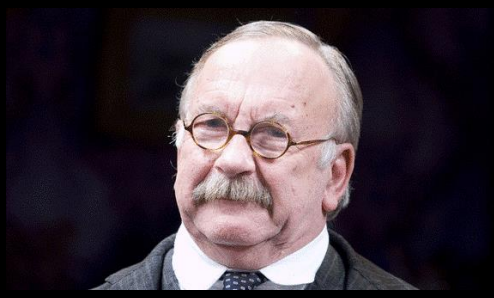
Sapphire tells Steel that the entity may not be able to rewrite memories completely. Creating an entire new world from memories would require too much power. Currently it's weak, but it grows stronger as it feeds and they need to break its connection with Gurney. Sapphire suddenly becomes vague, unable to remember, then she disappears. The Nostalgia appears along with Gurney. Steel tells the entity that they know what it is and what it can do. It gloats that it is every memory he has ever had, a fraction of a second behind him in a dead world forgotten by time, never able to live in the moment.

But Steel asks what happens when it has eaten a person's entire memories? It leaves just a mindless husk. And when it has eaten everyone's memories, left the entire world as empty, decaying corpses?

The Nostalgia says that Gurney accepted it, took it into his soul. It can give him everything back, but Steel argues that this will only be in Gurney's mind, not in reality. The Nostalgia replies that, as far as Gurney's perceptions are concerned, memory is reality.

The Nostalgia removes Steel's memory of how to speak, then reaches into his brain. There is so much there that it could remove. It could switch off every aspect of his personality and

ERIC GURNEY



AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**2**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Craft (Comedy) 4, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Argumentative
Emotional Complication (Major) – His faded career and estranged friends and family
Stubborn

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

make him into somebody else, or turn him into one long scream of agony that never stops. Steel is powerless to resist.

Kate wakes up in the auditorium and rushes off to find Sapphire and Steel. Instead, she bumps into Gurney with his daughter and his old friends in the prop room. Gurney tells her about the TV crew's plans to make him famous again, which confuses Kate. The Nostalgia becomes Dan.

Sapphire and Steel enter the theatre as though they have just arrived again. Their dialogue from before is repeated, though Steel comments on a strong sense of déjà vu. This time though, they arrived inside the music hall foyer instead of outside on the pier. The elementals begin their exploration of the theatre again as though for the first time.

"Dan" talks to Kate, calming her down. He says that he made a mistake when he left her. He loves her and is pleased she's expecting their baby.

The Nostalgia is now acting as the entire TV cast and crew setting up to film Gurney's show, *Second Time Around*, on the stage. The recording begins just as Sapphire and Steel enter. They believe that a sitcom is being filmed, but the dialogue begins to cover the break-up of Gurney's marriage and loses its humour, though the canned laughter can still be heard.

"Dan" tries to turn Kate against Sapphire and Steel by showing her that the doors aren't locked so they must have lied to her.

The action on stage continues with more tragic episodes from Gurney's life. Gurney becomes more upset as he re-enacts the death of his wife, who turned to drink when Gurney was away for long periods and fell down the stairs while drunk.

The Nostalgia now talks to Kate as her mother, Mrs Lambert.

On stage, "Tessa" confronts Gurney about being out with another woman when his wife fell down the stairs. "Tessa" leaves him for good, despite his pleas. Canned laughter and title music mark the end of the recording, but Sapphire and Steel intervene. They confront the Nostalgia about the lack of jokes in the script, and Gurney joins in, agreeing with the elementals. He has realised that the script is his life, down to the actual words. Sapphire explains that there are creatures outside time which will have remembered the exact details. Steel recognises the voices of the Nostalgia from somewhere and chaos erupts.

KATE LAMBERT

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Knowledge 1, Technology 2

TRAITS
Emotional Complication (Major) – Various failed relationships
Unlucky

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

"Mrs Lambert" tells Kate to come home to live with her and Dan and the baby. She'll take her back if Kate will only ask.

In the chaos, Sapphire and Steel begin to remember as their memories are becoming harder for the Nostalgia to suppress. The elementals finally break through, but the Nostalgia only needed enough time to eat Gurney. It tells the comedian the truth about his failures with friends and family.

Sapphire uses her mind to hold the Nostalgia in check while it's weak, drained of much of its energy. But the entity reveals that although it has drained Gurney, it has now secured Kate. It vanishes and Sapphire tells Gurney that they are trapped in an illusion.

Kate agrees to go home with "Mrs Lambert".

Sapphire and Steel realise that they must have met the Nostalgia before, and each time it has erased their memories. Each time they've been beaten, they've been sent back to the start in an eternal defeat! Steel reasons that the Nostalgia cannot prevent things from happening, only change them. So they need to defeat it before it can do that, perhaps by removing Kate and forcing it to retreat.

Steel goes to confront the Nostalgia in the prop room where it's with Kate, while Sapphire remains with Gurney to prevent him from falling under its control again.

"Mrs Lambert" is serving tea to her daughter and offers to bring her father back as well. Steel's voice breaks through but he's locked out of the prop room and has to resist the Nostalgia's memory-affecting powers to break it open.

Sapphire explains to Gurney that the Nostalgia can't erase their memories completely and forever. At some point, it has to let them have real memories or they would just be a blank slate with nothing for it to use. They need to identify the trigger to get rid of the Nostalgia. It took Gurney first, so it must have come here through him.

In Kate's fantasy, "Mrs Lambert" says that Steel is Graham and plants false memories in Kate that he was violent. Steel tries to get her to remember that this isn't true, but the entity tells her to kill him before he hits them again.

Gurney remembers the photo he brought and shows it to Sapphire. It's a picture of his wife Mary and daughter Tessa, but Sapphire scans it and determines it's not the trigger. She asks why he keeps it, and he explains that it's the last one he has of them. Mary is dead and Tessa blames him for it and won't speak to him. He did love Mary but he was lazy and a bad husband. Sapphire realises that Gurney is bitter about his past and that he was here for an interview to talk about that past. He was the

richest source of food available for the Nostalgia, someone who longs for a past when he was popular and loved. Kate was the next strongest source, having broken dreams and longing for the past despite her young age.

Kate attacks Steel with everything to hand in the prop room. Sapphire contacts him to let him know that the Nostalgia is using Kate and her regrets as a battery. Steel tells Kate to think about the future rather than the past, which breaks the entity's hold over her despite its attempts to distract her. The Nostalgia gives up and attacks them both as they retreat.

Sapphire tells Gurney he isn't the trigger directly, but it's something in him, one of his memories. By chance, Gurney stumbled on the exact memory at the wrong time.

As Steel and Kate try to escape, the Nostalgia cuts off Steel's telepathic contact with Sapphire by making her forget it. The Nostalgia has stored some reserves of power. It might not be able to wipe him any more but it can still find memories with which to attack him. The corridor erupts around them: an earthquake that Gurney was caught in in California in 1974; a particularly angry storm from 1996 that Kate remembers as being terrifying; a report of a landslide that Gurney saw on the news twenty years ago. Then it goes after Steel's memories.

Kate reaches the auditorium and tells Sapphire she must rescue Steel.

Steel is under attack by every threat and enemy he has ever faced and every sacrifice he has made. The Nostalgia detects his doubts, but Sapphire arrives and points a digital video camera from the TV crew's equipment at the entity, trapping it in digital form as a filmed memory. But Steel realises that digital recordings can be transmitted anywhere: Sapphire has just given the Nostalgia access to everyone on the planet!

They rush back to the auditorium and switch a monitor on. On it, they see the Nostalgia starting to explore the world. It can hear everyone as it's now in billions upon billions of TV screens and monitors. It can live in them all and spread itself further at the speed of transmission. It can even feel itself drifting off into the universe. It can eat forever!

The monitor goes blank as the Nostalgia switches it off. They can't kill it by just deleting the recording from the camera as it can affect technological memory just as well as organic, so the controls would forget to react.

Sapphire tells Steel that one of Gurney's memories is the trigger. He asks Gurney and Kate to go off and make them a cup of tea. As they do, they talk about what the Nostalgia offered each of them. Gurney thinks it feeds on lost hope, not memories.

Steel asks Sapphire if she can take time back on the mental plane only, which she confirms but only on a very limited scale. He tells her to take it back in Gurney's mind to before he arrived at the theatre, but Sapphire objects that this will destroy the memory centres of his mind, trapping him in a living death. Steel insists that the stakes are too high, and as Gurney is the one that brought the Nostalgia here, he's the only one who can send it back.

Gurney has heard the elementals talking and interrupts them. He realises what they need of him and, as he feels the world no longer loves

him, he's fed up with his life. Sapphire takes time back as Steel wanted.

In its digital domain, the Nostalgia suddenly feels the effect of what Sapphire is doing. It reappears on the monitor and tries to destroy the pier by summoning up a storm. Sapphire continues and soon everything is calm.

The Nostalgia is gone but the pier is falling apart. Steel tells the others to get everyone off and carries Gurney out of the theatre. Gurney has been reduced to mindlessness and, despite Kate's pleas, the elementals tell her they cannot reverse what has happened to him.

Before they depart, Sapphire asks Steel whether they have really just defeated the Nostalgia or is that only what they remember.

S TRIGGERS

Finding the trigger is one of the key objectives of this assignment in order for the elementals to be able to fight the Nostalgia. This time, it's not an object or a person but one of Eric Gurney's memories. His remembering it at precisely the moment he entered the theatre enabled the Nostalgia to latch onto him as its primary food source. Kate and her regrets are a secondary source and a secondary trigger.

S IRREGULARITIES

The Nostalgia isn't named as such in the story but is called this in the credits. It's an entity which feeds on people's memories, or more specifically their regrets about the past. As a creature entirely of the mind, it has no physical form but it can interact with the physical world through its illusory constructs.

The Nostalgia can draw on its subjects' memories to create illusory scenarios and environments, or to use as weapons and threats against its opponents. In the story, it used Eric Gurney's memories of an earthquake and a landslide to directly attack Steel, and also his being born in the Blitz even though Gurney cannot remember this himself. It also used Kate's memories of almost drowning and her dislike of *The Birds* in a similar manner. The illusions created by memories are real enough to cause physical damage. Other memories, such as those of the canned laughter and the Punch and Judy show, are used to torment, disorient or frighten instead of harm.

THE NOSTALGIA

AWARENESS	**5**	**PRESENCE**	**7**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**5**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**N/A**

SKILLS
Convince 5, Knowledge 4, Subterfuge 5, Technology 1

TRAITS
Alien
Control (Major) – By affecting machine memory so that it "forgets" to respond
Dependency (Major) – Requires access to a key memory to anchor its existence in our reality
Fear Factor 2
Hypnosis (Minor)
Immaterial
Invisible (Special Bad)
Psychic
Psychic Assault – A successful contest of Presence + Resolve allows it to inflict damage equal to its Resolve (ignores Armour and similar)
Psychic Illusions (Special) – see *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* p40
Shapeshift (Special)
Special - Memory Manipulation: By winning contests of Ingenuity + Convince, the Nostalgia can remove, add to or alter a subject's memories
Telepathy
Teleport

TECH LEVEL: All
STORY POINTS: 12

The Nostalgia can edit and alter memories, and even affect perception by changing them a split second after they had been made, effectively cutting victims off from the real world. It caused Steel to forget how to speak and Sapphire that she was in telepathic contact with him. It would be possible for it to completely wipe a person's memories, but this would then leave the victim useless to it, as it needs some real memories to manipulate and ultimately to feed on.

Although it hasn't a physical form, the Nostalgia can create ones for itself that look like anyone from a subject's memories. While doing so, it's very convincing, something helped by its low level of mind control. The Nostalgia can split its consciousness among multiple illusory people, controlling them all simultaneously even across different locations.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

Sapphire analyses the pier and theatre, and Gurney and Kate, and as usual learns some useful information about them all. But although she sensed something wrong when she and Steel first entered the theatre, she didn't realise that it's they who were taken by the Nostalgia, not the "missing" TV crew.

Sapphire attempts to stop time to be able to see the real world but only manages to do so very briefly. She also takes time back to save herself and Steel from drowning, and later within Gurney's mind, leaving him in a near vegetative state unable to make memories.

Steel is particularly short-tempered in this story, especially with Eric Gurney, whose irritability rubs him up the wrong way. Steel easily carries the heavy cables that Kate warns he wouldn't even be able to lift. He also demonstrates his technical abilities by connecting the TV crew's generator up to the theatre's electrical junction box. But Sapphire has to explain the concepts of the British seaside, sticks of rock, and Punch and Judy shows to him.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is a return to a traditional *Sapphire & Steel* story and a break from the ongoing story arc about the war with the transient beings. In some ways, the Nostalgia is a similar type of entity to the Shape from *Assignment IV* or the Pied Piper from *The Pied Piper's Return*.

The Nostalgia is a very powerful enemy and the GM should be flexible in applying its traits in order to replicate the effects it achieved in the story. But there is a balance to be had. If the Nostalgia is too powerful, it could easily become unbeatable, so there's a fine line for the GM to follow.

Among Steel's memories that the Nostalgia dredges up is a snatch of the song *What's the Matter, Fido?* that Sapphire wrote in *Cruel Immortality* (later heard in *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*). It also mentions Tully (from *Assignment II*) and Jen (from *Daisy Chain*) as examples of people whose deaths Sapphire and Steel are responsible for.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Eric Gurney:** 67-year-old comedian, famous in the 1970s. Estranged from his daughter, Tessa. Bitter and bad-tempered because of his faded career.
- **Kate Lambert:** Runner for the TV crew. 26 years old and one month pregnant. Haunted by her failed relationships.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Echoing Sapphire's concern at the end of the story, how can the elementals ever know if they have truly defeated the Nostalgia? Perhaps they will someday discover that they haven't and have been trapped in its memory illusions ever since…

ZERO

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in May 2008; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Three* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

Aboard the Space Shuttle *Aspirant*, attempted communications from Andrea Straker at Mission Control go unanswered. Andrea's message is that the shuttle's orbit is decaying and it will make atmospheric impact in ninety minutes. She says they need to wake up.

Silver arrives on the shuttle's flight deck and is met by Gold, who was here first. Silver says that this may not be an entirely routine assignment as there's a bit more damage than expected. Gold identifies the vessel as a space shuttle orbiter with three main engines located in the aft fuselage and two smaller engines flanking the tail for manoeuvres and to control re-entry speeds. All engines are unresponsive and most of the displays are out too, but Gold believes they're in a stable orbit for now.

There are two bodies, which were here when Gold first arrived. One of them has a small, circular burn injury clean through her head, probably made by a concentrated beam. The other has been clawed to pieces. Silver says the incisions are too regular to have been made by an animal. He senses the usual amount of time dilation, but not enough for anything to have broken through already. Gold is annoyed by human arrogance, but Silver admires their inquisitiveness and their dreams, which elementals cannot understand.

The pair hear a series of banging sounds from below and head down. Silver gives Gold advice on moving down the ladder in zero gravity. On the mid-deck, they discover the noise to be coming from the other side of an airlock hatch and find a third corpse nearby. With the

displays dead, Gold can't tell whether there's any atmosphere on the other side of the hatch. Silver says they need help on this one as it's no longer a technical mission and they don't know what's banging on the hatch. Gold disagrees and wants to find out more first.

Their debate is interrupted by the sound of Andrea at Mission Control trying to contact the shuttle by radio again. Silver goes to investigate, leaving Gold to check the third corpse. He notices it has a skin rash and blisters and its veins have turned black. Three deaths; three entirely different causes. But there are three more bunks in here, all zipped up.

Silver tries to reply to the radio, causing confusion at Mission Control as Andrea can't tell who he is. Silver repairs it, and she realises he's not one of the crew.

Gold unzips one of the bodies on the bunks to find it's little more than a burnt outline smeared to the sheets. He detects a trace of radioactivity. He unzips another one to reveal a female tagged "A. STRAKER". He can't find any marks on the body and detects a faint breath of air and a slow, weak heartbeat.

Mission Control demands that Silver answers

their questions, but he says he can't. In fact, he doesn't know how they can hear him as the radio shouldn't be able to send and receive simultaneously. Silver snips a wire to shut the radio up, but the voice continues and asks if Andrea is there or still sleeping. Even disconnecting the speaker doesn't make any difference and the voice continues, though it's starting to sound as if it's just broadcasting a series of pre-recorded messages. Silver realises the voice isn't from Earth as there's no delay in the signals. The source must be a lot closer.

The banging has started again, and Gold is tempted to open the hatch. He contacts Silver when he detects some sort of shadowy matter he can only see out of the corner of his eyes. It's feeling its way in by seeping around the edges of the hatch, even though it's supposed to be airtight. It forms itself into tendrils and reaches for him, crawling across the floor and walls, surrounding him. Gold panics, but the thing moves past, heading up the ladder towards the flight deck.

Silver sees the thing as a pool of shadow collecting on the floor near the top of the ladder. It rises up and takes form, becoming a robot with multiple arms and caterpillar tracks. It strikes at Silver but he moves back out of reach. The robot has a claw attachment, a drill and something resembling a soldering iron, all intended to be tools but which would also make do as weapons.

Gold reaches the top of the ladder and scans inside the robot in an attempt to stop its mechanical heart. But there's nothing inside; it's just a shape, not real. Silver pulls a live wire from the console and uses it against the robot. It loses molecular cohesion and dissipates.

Andrea's voice starts up from the radio again. Atmospheric impact is now in seventy-six minutes, despite Gold's earlier claim of the shuttle having a stable orbit.

They hear footsteps walking about the mid-deck below. But what makes footsteps in zero-G? Their speculation is interrupted by Steel's voice calling out to them. Sapphire and Steel have arrived!

On the mid-deck, Sapphire senses that whatever has broken through must have done so some time ago as it's already very strong. She doesn't know how the break could have been hidden from them for hours, maybe even days, but there's an almost overwhelming sensation of dread and hopelessness.

Silver advises the newcomers to avoid the airlock hatch. Sapphire says that that's where it feels strongest, its resentment at being trapped and the air of hopelessness again. But it's straining to get in and won't be shut out for long. Silver tells them of the sliver of the entity that managed to get aboard.

Alone on the flight deck, Gold is talking to something, slightly panicked and saying it can never win. There's no reply, but Steel overhears him as he reaches the top of the ladder. Gold claims there was a voice, but it's gone now. He says that it was Silver who

summoned Sapphire and Steel, and not with his blessing. But Steel points out that they have a deadline as the shuttle will break up when it hits the atmosphere in a little under an hour and a quarter's time. Gold suggests that perhaps that will solve the problem, but Steel replies that maybe that's what will set Time free. Steel notices that Gold is short of breath and a little hot.

The radio voice starts again, and Gold tells Steel that it's not Mission Control. Some of the messages seem to be normal communications such as updates on time until atmospheric re-entry, whereas others mention odd things like something getting on board somehow and that the door won't hold for long.

Sapphire asks Silver if the dead crew were all killed by the same robot. He's never seen anything like it before, but a maintenance robot wouldn't be able to kill by means of radiation or a virus. There must be more than one thing here to deliver a private death to each of them, apart from the one tagged A. Straker, who's still alive. As they talk, the banging from the airlock hatch starts up again.

While Sapphire begins a scan of Straker, Silver mentions Copper. Sapphire has heard that he stumbled upon something, and that the transients are about to make a move, something big, and that what he saw threatened their plans. Either they needed him out of the way or they made him an offer he couldn't refuse. But Silver can't believe that Copper would ever bend the rules let alone switch sides; he doesn't have the imagination.

Sapphire senses dread in Straker, as if she's seen the future and is terrified by it.

Meanwhile, Steel is trying to get some answers from the voice on the radio, but with no success. It just keeps saying the same things, including an instruction for Andrea to wake up. Sapphire and Silver join them. Sapphire asks if Gold can restart the engines. Gold is sceptical because of the damage to them, but Silver offers to help. He'd need to go outside to have a look first, but Steel interrupts as starting the engines aren't their priority.

Steel asks why it's trying to break through here rather than on Earth, and Sapphire suddenly notices that they can't see the Earth through the windows, even though Gold and Silver saw it when they first arrived. The voice on the radio talks of "*The end of the world!*" and "*Zero!*" Steel refuses to accept that the Earth has been destroyed, as they would have felt it. Sapphire speculates that the Earth that was there earlier was only a projection. She says that Straker had a dream like this, of the end. Perhaps it's a warning of something to come.

With Steel's help, Sapphire might be able to reach out to Andrea Straker even though she's in a coma. But Sapphire could be trapped if it goes wrong. They join hands and Sapphire seeks to enter Straker's mind, at first finding only darkness. Then, she's in a small grey room that smells of despair. Everything is grey, even the coveralls she's wearing. The door is locked and the small window is high and barred. Outside, it's dark and there's the sound of gunfire. There's no light and no hope. Steel

speaks to Sapphire to give her strength, and she notices a single glass bulb in the ceiling, but its light is faint. Somebody unlocks the door and enters… Sapphire is filled with Straker's fear.

Gold notes that the Earth is back. The radio voice speaks again. Silver comments that it seemed to respond to him before, but now he's not sure. He realises it's starting to use phrases that were spoken by he and Gold earlier. It's as if it's trying to communicate with them but lacks the vocabulary.

Silver notices that there's something wrong with Gold. His skin is developing a rash with blisters on his cheeks and his veins are turning black. Silver calls to Steel down on the mid-deck and tells him Gold has contracted the virus. But Steel insists it's just another ghost like the robot and he cannot leave Sapphire now.

In Straker's mind, alarm klaxons are sounding. Andrea gives Sapphire a gun and tells her to flee. The place will be crawling with aliens in a minute! There's gunfire close by, pinning them down. Sapphire realises this isn't a memory and that she's in more danger than they thought. This is a dream as aliens don't exist in the real world, at least none they've encountered yet. Andrea shouts about the end of the world as Sapphire tries to contact Steel again.

Steel has gone up to the flight deck to check on Gold, telling him he shouldn't need any help to resist a virus that isn't actually real. Time is doing this to him, like it brought the robot to attack Silver earlier. It will dissipate as the robot did. Silver tells Gold that the virus is no longer in him, so he just needs to repair the damage it has done.

In Straker's dream, Sapphire and Andrea are almost free. They just have to cross a yard and reach a gap in the fence. Sapphire points out that the dream contains jumps in location, but Andrea doesn't listen. Sapphire is worried that if the dream ends, she will die. She is surrounded by the aliens and surrenders, but they're going to shoot her anyway. Just in time, Steel comes back and wakes her up.

Sapphire tells Steel and Silver about the dream. She wonders if they're encountering ghosts from dreams, and that the astronauts have been killed by things from their nightmares. Sapphire tells the others that in the dream Andrea blamed Sapphire for letting the aliens in, believing her to be a scientist. Time is exploiting fear of the future, with Andrea falling prey to the popular trope of seemingly friendly aliens turning out to be hostile.

Up on the flight deck, Gold has recovered and is again speaking to something. He tells it that he doesn't know whether he was deliberately targeted with the virus, but it failed anyway. He still has his assignment and will do whatever is necessary. Silver arrives and is relieved to find Gold is well again. He tells Gold that Steel needs him on the mid-deck.

Steel has a plan, but Sapphire insists it's too dangerous and that he swore never to attempt it again. Gold arrives and Sapphire informs him that Steel intends to take his temperature down to drive whatever is in the airlock out. This will give Silver some time to inspect the engines and also see what they're facing. Sapphire points out that Steel needs Lead for insulation, but he replies that he can do it with Gold's help. Gold can't insulate Steel but he can conduct heat into him and start his metabolism working again to bring him back.

Steel tells Sapphire to go up to the flight deck and stay there with Silver. He starts the process and tells Gold to open the hatch.

Reaching the flight deck, Sapphire stays in telepathic contact with Gold so she knows what's happening. The radio becomes very active, as if it's trying to warn them. "*The door won't hold! The door won't hold!*"

Gold informs Sapphire that Steel has taken himself down to absolute zero. He opens the hatch and sees something huge filling the airlock. It's shifting and changing: the robot again, a man with a gun, some sort of monster, so many facets and shapes, windows to other times. Steel faces down the ghosts, driving them back one ponderous step at a time. They form faces, screaming at him, but they flee from his approach, not through the exit hatch but through another. Gold follows Steel in and finds a white tunnel leading towards the rear of the shuttle. There's air so it's presumably a habitable module. Steel is beating the thing, it looks smaller now and there's no space for it to manoeuvre. At the end of the tunnel, there's a laboratory and another body. But now Steel is struggling. A few more steps and he could drive it through the hull, but it gets away and dissipates.

Steel asks Gold to bring him back, but Gold replies that he doesn't think he will. He blocks Steel's telepathic calls to Sapphire for help. Gold realises that this looks like revenge but Steel knows that he has an assignment from a different power to theirs. Gold confesses that he reassessed his priorities and loyalties after the incident on the yacht, and he now answers to a higher authority.

Sapphire and Silver arrive in the laboratory. Gold tells them that he failed to thaw Steel out. Sapphire is upset and heads back to the mid-deck, followed by Silver. Gold considers they've spent too long around humans and become too emotional, too irrational.

Sapphire and Silver discuss the body they briefly saw in the lab. This one had mutated or devolved. It had hair on its face, with an unnaturally sloping brow and expanded muscles. It probably died from the strain on its heart. Sapphire wonders about it being the victim of a genetic experiment gone wrong, but she thinks that none of this is an accident. She intends to take time back to find whoever used the tunnel and the lab.

Gold is talking to Steel's body about consequences. He doesn't understand how Steel let Sapphire change him when he was supposed to be the strong one. He adds that humans have been responsible for every breach they've been assigned to investigate.

Sapphire takes time back. She and Silver see one of the astronauts crossing towards the airlock. Then the first time the thing emerged. This time the astronaut is Andrea Straker seeing someone and being afraid. This is when it all started, but Sapphire can't see what it is, as if it's fighting her even from the past.

Gold emerges from the tunnel and tells them he's searched the lab and found no clues. He has a suggestion: kill the dreamer and the dreams will die. Sapphire says that this is only a last resort and they must carry on with Steel's plan. Silver tells Gold to help him get into one of the spacesuits.

Sapphire is again listening to the voice on the radio. She realises that Andrea Straker is also aware of the real world, just a little. She knows on some level what is happening, but she can't wake from her dreams. What she knows feeds back into them, driving her fear. Sapphire reasons that the transients made a deal with her, but that she's now afraid of whatever it was. If they let the shuttle strike the atmosphere, it will break up and merely result in the deaths of six astronauts and the loss of one orbiter. There must be more to the transients' plan. Sapphire tells Andrea to

concentrate on her voice and wake up now!

Gold is still helping Silver into the spacesuit, but they can't get its radio to work. Silver says he's hardly likely to need it and will be safe enough. The ghosts can't be that strong yet.

Steel's voice now comes over the radio alongside Andrea's, but also speaking repeated phrases. Sapphire realises that he must still be alive and is trying to warn her about the transient beings. She also realises that the transients set this off out here so that the elementals wouldn't detect it until too late.

In a shared dream, Andrea and Steel are aboard the shuttle with something trying to break the hatch down from the other side. Andrea says that it's their friends but they're dead, killed by a zombie virus. Steel feels very cold and is confused as what Andrea is saying doesn't make sense. The other astronauts' bodies are still here, so how can they also be in the airlock as zombies? The hatch opens but the zombies dissipate as the robot did. Andrea is still afraid and on the verge of panic. The banging on the hatch begins again.

Silver tries to contact Sapphire by telepathy, but he doesn't hear any response. He's reached the engines and found nothing wrong with them. They've been kept idle by some outside force, and there's only one of them who could do that. He knows that Gold can't be allowed to learn that he's been found out, and that it would be very easy for Gold to set up a barrier between him and Sapphire. Silver is already lost and there's no way back. He's adrift with no means of getting back to the orbiter, and his air is running low…

Steel is again trying to communicate with Sapphire over the shuttle radio. But Sapphire has already worked out what he knows. The transients opened a door into Andrea's dreams, and through them into the dreams of all mankind. Their greatest hopes and their greatest fears. Atmospheric impact is now seventeen minutes away. When that happens, the shadow entities will cause the ghosts of every science fiction apocalypse to happen, all at once. It will be the end of Earth and the human race. But with no more dreams, there will be no more triggers. Time will have confined itself again. She's still missing something. Sapphire works out that Gold has betrayed them just as he enters. He has heard what she was saying to the radio.

Gold confesses that she's correct. He explains

ANDREA STRAKER

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**4**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 3, Convince 2, Marksman 2, Science 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 1, Technology 3, Transport 5 (AoE: Spacecraft)

TRAITS
Brave
Voice of Authority

During this story, Straker also has **Impaired (Major) – Comatose**, and requires medical attention to recover

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

that without humans, there will be no more triggers. He didn't want to sacrifice Silver, but he needed to be disposed of, just like he disposed of Steel. Sapphire dares him to stand in her way as she heads for the ladder to try to reverse what he has done and bring the others back.

They head down to the airlock, but Gold says that Silver is probably halfway to the Moon by now. He tries to justify his actions again, but Silver suddenly bursts through the hatch. He grabs Gold and starts to throttle him. Silver says he had to feel his way back along the hull after sending a fake message for Gold to hear, so he could take him by surprise.

Sapphire insists that the transients lied to Gold and that they need him to bring Steel back. Silver heads up to the flight deck and encounters Steel… or something in his form. Silver is highly suspicious of who it really is, and it becomes apparent that it's another shadow entity mimicking Steel. "Steel" advances on Silver, smashing equipment as he does.

Below, Gold is trying to warm the real Steel up but he's so cold. Sapphire tells him to revive Steel whatever the cost. She hears Silver's call for help from the flight deck and reluctantly leaves Gold to complete his task.

Silver tries to reason with the entity, but Sapphire arrives and tells him it's useless as it's acting solely on instinct. She holds time back, stretching each second into minutes with Silver keeping the field localised to the ghost. It melts and retreats back into the hull for now. Silver examines the damage the entity has done to the shuttle controls.

Steel wakes and recalls that Gold betrayed him. They hear the shuttle's engines start up, the result of Silver's work.

Silver still has a lot of work to do before he can find a viable orbit, and he tells Sapphire they need a Plan B. She goes down to speak to Steel. Steel's only plan is to destroy the shuttle while it's still out here in space, and the break would then heal itself over time. But they can't leave the destruction to chance and need somebody on board to ensure nothing survives. They both know who Steel means, and he insists it's not out of revenge. Sapphire goes to speak with Gold.

Silver turns off the engines as they can't do much good now. They only have ten minutes. Steel arrives and Silver offers to stay behind and try to make a safe landing, then keep the

nightmares inside as long as possible while they work something out.

Sapphire is talking to Gold. She realises that he didn't want this, that he's not capable of genocide. But now they can't stop the *Aspirant* from carrying the nightmares to Earth unless they destroy it utterly. He understands what she's asking of him, to use his control over friction to slow something down or speed something up and ensure nothing survives. Gold is cynical about how Sapphire and Steel work, and believes that the human race will always release new triggers. Sapphire replies that the elementals will always be there to put things right, whatever the cost.

Gold returns to Steel and Silver and tells them he has agreed to what Sapphire has asked of him. He rejects Silver's sympathy. Silver goes to join Sapphire and helps her get Andrea Straker into the remaining spacesuit. Steel joins them and objects to them saving the astronaut, but Sapphire insists. They depart.

On the flight deck, Gold momentarily has second thoughts but it's too late. The radio wishes him goodnight and sweet dreams. Gold counts down towards zero as the shuttle hits the atmosphere…

TRIGGERS

A precise trigger isn't identified in this story, but it's likely that Andrea Straker struck some sort of deal with the transients which enabled them to use her as patient zero for the nightmare entities. Why she did this and what she was hoping to get in return aren't known, but it may have something to do with her nightmares of alien invaders or a zombie virus.

IRREGULARITIES

The transient beings are behind the events of this story, planning to return the *Aspirant* to Earth with the nightmare entities on board. Unless they are totally destroyed, they will

NIGHTMARE ENTITY

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**1**
COORDINATION	**4**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**1**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Fighting 2, Marksman 2, Subterfuge 4, Survival 5

TRAITS
Alien
Alien Appearance
Fear Factor 2 – Increases to **Fear Factor 4** against those whose fear it has become
Immaterial (Special Good) – Can pass through solid matter if necessary
Immunity – Although the entity can apparently be killed, it merely dissipates and will reform given time; only complete destruction kills it
Natural Weapon (Minor) – Can create forms with natural weapons capable of Strength +2 damage
Natural Weapon (Major) – Sometimes its chosen form has ranged weapons capable of 6(3/6/L) damage
Psychic
Replicate – Can split entities off from itself
Shapeshift (Special) – Takes on a form from an observer's nightmares, adjusts its Attributes and Skills and acquires any new Traits appropriate for its new form

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4-6

infect the human race and use mankind's worst apocalyptic fears to wipe it out.

The transients are represented here by the nightmare entities, normally insubstantial creatures which can take on the form and abilities of anything a victim fears. For Straker, they become victims of a zombie plague; for another astronaut, they became a plague virus; for Silver, one (or a fragment of one) became a killer robot.

Gold is revealed to have joined the transients as he believes that wiping out the human race will prevent the creation of any more triggers that enable Time to break out. Is this also the plan of the transients he's now working for? If so, it seems they are not working for Time but for another "higher authority" which is also opposed to it.

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND SILVER AND GOLD)

Stats for Gold were provided in *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!*, but they were written without access to the audios. Updated stats for him are provided opposite.

Silver and Gold are given their own assignment. Silver explains that, without Operators, Specialists are assigned to purely technical missions. But this one changes when they realise that people have died, and so he calls in Sapphire and Steel.

Gold is irritated that he wasn't allowed to go on a solo mission, claiming "they" don't trust him. Silver adds that maybe he's a little inexperienced.

Silver and Gold discuss the differences between humans and themselves. Separately, Sapphire claims there are no aliens, at least none the elementals have encountered yet. She also tells Gold that if it weren't for humans, there would be no point to life as there'd be nobody to live it. So if the elementals aren't human *or* alien, they presumably aren't alive. This again hints at them perhaps being artificial constructs.

GOLD

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**5**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 4, Science 2, Subterfuge 2, Technology 3, Transport 5

TRAITS
Adversary (Major) - Time
Alien
Arrogant
By the Book
Control (Minor) – Can influence friction to affect any machinery with moving parts, especially vehicles
Elemental Agent
Feel the Turn of the Universe
Impulsive
Obligation (Major) – The Authority
Psychic
Psychic Training
Technically Adept
Telepathy
Teleport
Weakness (Minor) – Lack of empathy (-2 penalty on all social rolls)

In *Zero*, Gold also has **Dark Secret (Major)**

TECH LEVEL: 7
STORY POINTS: 12

Silver implies that elementals cannot dream, while Sapphire believes that if she were to be killed inside a human dream, she would die. It's once again confirmed that elementals need to breathe and that they can contract viruses.

When Sapphire and Steel arrive on the shuttle, Sapphire tells Silver that Mercury sends his regards and that "*It's your move*." This presumably refers to a game they're playing (chess perhaps?), and Silver replies that he won't be rushed. After all, he's been out of action for a while, referring to being trapped in a Möbius loop (as mentioned in *Second Sight*).

Sapphire mentions that Copper is missing, possibly having defected to the transients, though Silver thinks this unlikely. It's implied that Copper used to be Silver's mentor (which explains the comment in *Assignment I* that Copper is having problems with Silver again), and that Silver is now Gold's mentor. Gold's description of "*dour old Copper*" and Sapphire referring to Copper as "he" don't fit with the speculative background, stats and casting included in the Appendix to *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* Perhaps, like Sapphire and Steel in *Second Sight*, a newer, younger version has since been created to replace the original, missing Copper.

Sapphire uses her powers to scan the orbiter and Andrea Straker's comatose body. She enters Andrea's dreams but needs Steel's helps to escape from them. Sapphire takes time back to see the start of the break on the shuttle, and later slows time around one of the entities, forcing it to dissipate and retreat.

Steel lowers his temperature to absolute zero to drive the entities out of the shuttle's airlock, something Sapphire says he swore never to do again as it's too dangerous. In the absence of Lead, Gold acts as a conductor of heat into Steel to restart his metabolism. To do this, Gold is using Elemental Agent to purchase Lead's Insulator trait for the scene (see page 14 of *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!*). Gold later mentions that he has some power over friction, which explains his ability to affect the movement of vehicles. He uses it here to keep the shuttle's engines idle. He also blocks Silver's attempts to contact Sapphire telepathically, again by spending a Story Point.

During this story, it's revealed that Gold has betrayed the elementals and joined the transients. This is the real reason he had hoped this would be a solo mission for himself, so there'd be no other elementals he'd have to deal with. Sapphire persuades Gold that the only way to defeat their enemy here is by sacrificing himself. He comments that this is the secret of Sapphire and Steel's success: Steel identifies the sacrifices and Sapphire talks them into doing what is needed. In *Remember Me*, Eric Gurney – one of those sacrifices - made a similar observation.

In *Assignment VI*, Sapphire and Steel both mentioned that the transients had tried to recruit them but they each declined. Here, we learn that they approached Steel while he was on a mission on a boat. Could this have been during the assignment aboard the *Mary Celeste* which was mentioned in *Assignment I*? He also admits that it was Sapphire's compassion for humans that convinced him that he was already working for the right side.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is another story in the Transients War story-arc. We learn that there are rumours that the transients are planning something big. It could be the plan they're carrying out in this story, but perhaps it's something different.

The space shuttle is an unusual setting for *Sapphire & Steel*, and it provides an even more confined space than usual. There are only a few cramped areas which have an atmosphere: flight deck/cockpit; mid-deck with additional crew seating, bunks and airlock hatch; and lower deck/utility area, all linked by a ladder; plus the tunnel leading from the airlock to the

hidden lab. For an idea of the size and layout of the interior of a real orbiter, technical diagrams can be found on NASA's website here.

There are concerns such as maintaining a breathable atmosphere to be considered. Naturally for a contemporary story, there is no artificial gravity aboard the shuttle. Any characters who haven't been trained in zero-G environments will have a -2 penalty on all rolls related to moving around (and the GM may require more rolls than usual, even for actions for which they aren't normally needed). The GM should remember that any unanchored character who tries something like throwing or shooting, or even landing a punch, will find themselves floating in the opposite direction.

The shuttle is used as a location rather than a vehicle in the story, so full stats aren't provided. However, its hull has Armour 8 for any attempt, deliberate or otherwise, to breach it, and it requires at least 2 points of damage to create even a small hole. If the hull is breached or the airlock is opened to space, or if any character ventures outside without a spacesuit (or an appropriate Environmental trait), the rules for exposure to vacuum from the core rulebook should be used.

Judging by Andrea Straker's accent, the shuttle mission seems to be British or European, or perhaps international, rather than American. But this could be misleading and is largely irrelevant anyway.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Silver:** An elemental agent; specialist in all things technical. See *Sapphire and Steel Have Been Assigned!* for Silver's stats.
- **Gold:** An elemental agent with an affinity with vehicles.
- **Andrea Straker:** Comatose astronaut aboard the *Aspirant*. Interacts with the waking world via the shuttle's radio, though her messages are confused and repetitive.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- Gold's betrayal offers an intriguing premise. Would player characters also agree to defect to the transients' "higher authority", particularly if it meant they could defeat Time totally and forever? The human cost might be high, but the transients undoubtedly make a convincing argument. A campaign with players as transient beings fighting the elementals is an interesting alternative.

WALL OF DARKNESS

PUBLICATION

Released on CD in August 2008; re-released as a download as part of *Sapphire & Steel - The Complete Series Three* in March 2024.

SYNOPSIS

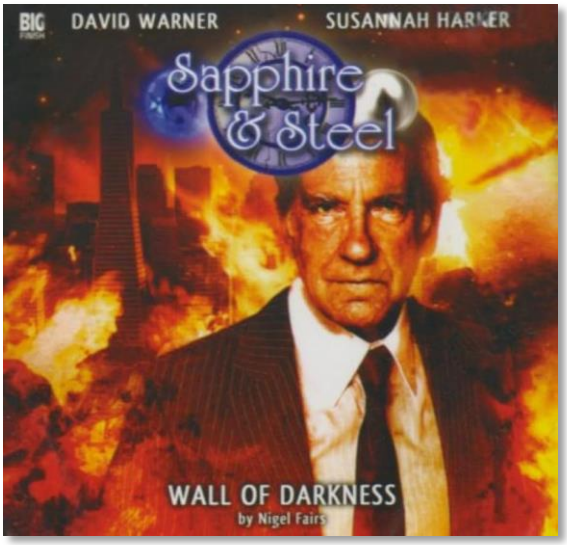
Justin Brandom wakes from an apocalyptic nightmare and is comforted by his mother, Sally. Elsewhere, Sapphire wakes from a similar nightmare.

Sally is concerned that Justin is drunk, even though they have to go to see Jason Knight for Appraisal Day. She says he needs to sober up, but he tells her he's not going as it will make no difference. Sally pleads with him, and Justin finally agrees.

Sapphire and Steel arrive in a shopping arcade. Sapphire says they are in San Francisco in the present (July 8th, 2008). The shops look like they've been looted, and there's structural damage. She speculates that there could have been an earthquake and scans the arcade to determine that they are on the third of four floors. They are on their own, and the time rupture is below them. Sapphire says that none of the items for sale on this floor date beyond 2004, so the arcade has been closed for some time.

Jason Knight notes that Sally and Justin are two minutes late for the appraisal. He angrily tells his sister Miranda that this is a governmental procedure, not a cocktail party. Nevertheless, she has made a cherry pie despite this being a Level 9 Appraisal Centre. The doorbell rings and, Jason goes to let Sally and Justin in.

Steel asks how they get down to the next floor. Sapphire replies that the escalators are not working, though there's a generator below the arcade operating the emergency lighting. Maybe it came on automatically when the



shops were looted. She notes that there's an echo of the time rupture somewhere here.

The elementals find themselves outside *The Vintage Teapot*, a shop that sells English antiques. They go in and Sapphire scans to locate the echo. It's in a corner, where they find an English variation on an American Laffing Sal animatronic figure from the late Victorian era which starts to laugh. Its label names it "Dan the Magic Circle Man", presumably because its head is going round in circles. Steel smashes the figure's cabinet to shut it up and to get at the coins inside. Sapphire identifies one of the coins as the source of the echo. It's a British coin from 2004 and must have been in contact with someone important or perhaps infected.

Sapphire and Steel hear somebody whistling in a slow, sinister fashion. Sapphire senses it's down on Level 2.

Jason explains to Sally and Justin that they can't expect everyone to be perfect, but they must strive for perfection every day. Miranda serves coffee while Jason talks about a discussion he had recently with Madam President. Justin is contemptuous, so Sally apologies for him, saying that he's been unwell but will soon be back to his old self.

On Level 2, Steel notes that there are shops here selling things such as English antiques, historical costumes and second-hand books, and Sapphire comments that it's not very American. Americans like to focus on the future rather than the past, though she admits this is a generalisation. She identifies the tune being whistled as *God Bless America*. It's coming from a second-hand toy shop.

There's a brief snatch of "the princess" reciting *Here's a Little Choo-Choo Train* from their assignment aboard a steam train (see *The Passenger*). Inside the toy shop, they find a model railway set up. Sapphire abruptly vanishes and finds herself in a prison. She remains in contact with Steel and describes visiting one of the inmates, whom she says she loves.

Jason is proceeding with the appraisal, deducting points for Sally and Justin being late despite Miranda's objections. The monthly total is a disappointing 32 points.

Sapphire returns and describes the prisoner as a young man. She felt love for him and the pain of loss and separation. Steel questions her further but she can't tell him any more, except that whoever she was channelling is here somewhere, but she doesn't belong here. The British coin they found was hers.

Left on their own, Justin tells Miranda that he never had any mother or sisters. Miranda is worried about Sally, and Justin tells her his mother's mad. He also rails against Jason and asks if Miranda ever dreams of getting away from here. He confesses to her about finding a secret wine cellar.

Jason informs Sally that they may be expecting a very special visitor, but Sally informs him that she and Justin are moving to New York soon. She tells him she'll give Miranda a good reference as the customers like her.

Justin asks Miranda to meet him tonight so he can show her something. Jason enters and tells Justin to take his mother home as she's insane.

Sapphire and Steel can hear *Ring a Ring o' Roses* being sung and childish laughter, both coming from a bookshop. The woman they're searching for has been here but isn't any more, which confuses Sapphire.

Sapphire now finds herself in a car, though again still in telepathic contact with Steel. She can't see the driver's face, but the woman she now is tells him to slow down, he's going too fast. The driver just laughs and the car skids and hits a man as it crashes. Sapphire returns to Steel. She tells him she felt the victim's pain and lived his dying moments.

Justin argues with his mother about getting them thrown out of their appraisal. She's sorry. She gets so confused and things just slip out. Sally accidentally calls him Russell, and Justin angrily corrects her.

Sapphire tells Steel she senses hate, but not from the victim. She thinks the driver's name

was Russell and that the crash took place on March 4th, 2002.

The escalator Sapphire and Steel are riding on stops and they see a young man in his twenties in a second-hand bookshop called *Bookends*. Sapphire says he's not corporeal, but a ghost or an echo. The man is the whistler. Sapphire and Steel enter the shop, but he's gone. Sapphire senses the rupture is in one of the books in a side room. There they find a box containing several books, including *The Abandoned Lady, Murder on the Orient Express, Dracula* and *The Other Side of the Sky*. Sapphire thinks the latter is the source. It's by Arthur C. Clarke and features a Möbius loop. She says that there's something about these books and this room, as if they've been here before. She also says that the book isn't here, not in this shop in the present, even though they can see it and touch it.

Sapphire is elsewhere again. She can't move and hears the whistling man close by. She can't see his face and asks him who he is. There's the sound of the car crashing. Steel calls for Sapphire, but there's no reply.

Justin is again drunk and arguing with his mother. He says she's suffocating him and accuses her of being a mad, ridiculous mess. Justin storms out, but there's another male voice after he leaves. Sally's upset and tells him she's sorry but she can't come to New York after all.

In the bookshop, Steel also hears the whistling man and demands to know what he has done with Sapphire. The escalator starts going up again but Steel refuses this invitation to use it. He hears snatches of old memories and then Sapphire's voice, telling him the clock has stopped, but she doesn't elaborate. She doesn't have the coin any more and says there's somebody coming up the stairs. At that moment, Ruby appears near Steel.

Sapphire tries to contact Steel again but fails. She's also in the bookshop, which is now intact, and Miranda asks if she can help her.

Ruby becomes exasperated with Steel as he tries to repair a lift so that he can go down rather than up. She would rather he came out altogether. He isn't convinced that she really is Ruby. Finally, he gets the lift working and takes it down.

Sally tries to stop Justin from going out during curfew, warning him that he'll be shot. Justin doesn't care and tells her to go back to bed. They hear the ding of the lift arriving, and Steel steps out. He tells them he's come from the shopping arcade on the next floor up. Sally thinks this must be one of Jason's tests, and Justin tells Steel he doesn't believe him as the shopping arcade doesn't exist. San Francisco was wiped out by a nuclear bomb in 2004!

The war lasted for twelve minutes. Everything has gone, every city, every country. The few survivors sheltered underground, waiting for more explosions in the impenetrable, never-ending wall of darkness that is now their prison.

Sally tells Steel that they've been very careful to stick to the regulations. Jason has made sure of that. He sends anyone who transgresses to the Boiler Room, where it's rumoured they don't get a fair trial and are shot. Sally and Justin are just crazy Brits who stumbled into a lift at the right time. The city is now a valley of dust and they're separated from it by two hundred feet of concrete.

Justin tells Steel he was an alcoholic, a gambler and a joke. Sally moved over here to mother him, but it was too little, too late. Now they're stuck together. He leaves.

Sally confirms to Steel that they've been down here for four years. There are ten of them, though there was one other, Simon someone, but he passed away early on. Steel asks where their power and air and food come from. She tells him about the generator and there's food on the lower level, but only Jason is allowed access. Jason lives in the management suite, but there's a broadcast from the President due tonight so he's probably in the Boiler Room now, their centre of communications. Steel notices one of Justin's books, *The Other Side of the Sky*. Sally says he was reading it on the day the bombs dropped.

Expecting to meet Miranda, Justin hears the whistling man. Jason appears and tells him that Miranda is spending some time in the Boiler Room. He plays a recording of Justin and Miranda talking earlier and says he wants to see Justin's stash of wine.

A phone rings somewhere but Sally doesn't answer it, instead continuing to talk as if to herself. But she can hear a male voice replying and tells him they can't go on like this. Steel goes out to locate the phone.

Justin tells Jason he intended to take Miranda up to San Francisco. He wants to breathe real air again even though it would poison him. He shows Jason his wine stash, and Jason tells him he could be sent to the Boiler Room for this. But Jason likes Justin and urges him to have patience.

Justin tells Jason that a miracle happened to him years ago. Someone – something - saved his life. By rights, he should be dead but he's not. Jason tells him to go back to his mother and gives him a bottle of wine from the stash. When Justin arrives home, the President's broadcast starts on the radio.

Steel heads back to the lift. He can hear the whistling again and the sound of the telephone still ringing. The lift dings. Something wants him to go up, and something else wants him to stay down here and answer the phone. The lift door opens to reveal Ruby, who says she wants Steel to go up, but she doesn't know where Sapphire is. Steel closes the lift door in her face and forces the lock on the Boiler Room.

In her broadcast, President Godwin promises to wipe the face of evil from the planet. Angered by her rhetoric, Justin switches the radio off. Sally says they could go for a walk tomorrow, perhaps even go to the Island together.

In the Boiler Room, Steel finds Miranda, who's almost out of her mind with fear. Through a

door are the bodies of those Jason has shot. Sobbing, Miranda says that he used to be a frightened little boy, sitting in his room and making tapes of teachers, family and voices from the television, and make them say whatever he wanted. He was bullied at school and she had to take care of him. Even after he had grown up, he was weak. He doesn't work for the government but was an engineer who fixed drinks dispensers. Jason was accidentally sent a package of key cards to the bunker instead of the shopping mall and saw it as a sign.

Jason enters and shoots Miranda. He holds Steel at gunpoint, but Steel uses a fraction of his power to freeze Jason's gun, burning his hands. Steel notices a shelf of tapes. One is labelled "Presidential Broadcast 6/20/06", but there are others with future dates: Jason has been creating the broadcasts himself.

A phone rings and Steel answers it. Sapphire is on the other end. She says the arcade has changed. It's intact, the shops haven't been looted, and there are people. She can't tell whether she's in the past as time is fluid and intangible here.

Steel hangs up and tells Jason there was no nuclear war in 2004 and that he's created a fantasy for himself. Somehow this has created a time fracture, which is why they were summoned here. Steel says that there are forces here trying to tempt him back up into the arcade, perhaps including using Sapphire's voice.

Steel forces Jason into the lift and they go up to the next level, where the arcade is looted and derelict. They hear the whistling man and the escalator starts up again. Steel steps onto it, taking Jason with him.

In the bookshop, Sapphire hangs up frustrated. She wonders who wrote Steel's name and the phone number in the copy of *The Other Side of the Sky*. Miranda tells her she'll have to ask the shop's owner, Mrs Brandom. Sally enters, but when she sees the book, she becomes angry as the room it came from should remain locked. The book is not for sale!

Steel and Jason step off the escalator and see a view of the devastation of San Francisco. Jason is overwhelmed at the sight, and Steel realises he was wrong: there *was* a nuclear explosion in 2004.

Through the locked door, Sapphire scans the room the book came from. Everything in it belonged to a boy. Not just the books but a number of children's toys. The boy was Sally's son, Justin, but he's been dead for seven years.

SALLY BRANDOM

AWARENESS	**4**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**3**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Convince 1, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 1

TRAITS
Devotion – Justin and Russell
Eccentric (Major) – Often seems confused or mad as she's aware of both realities
Emotional Baggage (Major) – Guilt about Russell's fate
Passionate Love – Justin

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

JUSTIN BRANDOM

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Athletics 2, Convince 2, Fighting 1, Subterfuge 3, Technology 2

TRAITS
In the reality in which Justin survived, he has **Argumentative** and **Dependency (Minor: Alcohol**). In the reality in which he died in 9/11, he has **Immaterial**, but as a Special Good trait as he can become corporeal at will, and **Invisible (Special Good)** as he's normally seen only by Sally.

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 6

The whistling man enters the shop and says hello to his mother. This is Sally's other son, Russell.

Miranda returns with a newspaper and is shocked to see Russell. She believes he must have broken out of jail and swam to shore. She attempts to call the police, but the phone is dead. Sally can't understand how Russell can be here, as she insists she saw him that afternoon in the Terrorist Detention Centre on Alcatraz Island. He's supposed to be in prison. Russell says he's not supposed to be anywhere; he's drifting like a bubble on the foam of time. He disappears by walking through the wall.

Sapphire tells Sally and Miranda that the thing they saw wasn't her son. It was corporeal, but there's a creature that can manifest itself in different forms and then disappear. She asks about the book again, but Sally becomes angry with her and tells her to go. The shop's phone rings and Miranda answers, but it's Ruby for Sapphire. Ruby tells her that she tried to speak with Steel but he didn't listen, and that she should look in a mirror. Ruby then hangs up.

Sally again insists that Sapphire leave, so she does. Outside the shop, she tries to contact Ruby and Steel but gets no reply. She bumps

RUSSELL BRANDOM

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**4**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**4**
INGENUITY	**3**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 2, Knowledge 2, Subterfuge 4

TRAITS
In the reality in which Justin died in 9/11, Russell has **Imprisoned (Major)**. In the reality in which Justin survived, he has **Immaterial**, but as a Special Good trait as he can become corporeal at will, plus a **Special** trait allowing him to pass between the two realities.

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

JASON KNIGHT

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**3**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**3**

SKILLS
Convince 3, Fighting 1, Marksman 3, Subterfuge 3, Technology 3

TRAITS
By the Book
Dark Secret (Major) – Creating the tapes of the President's broadcasts himself
Ruthless (Major)

EQUIPMENT
Rifle: 7(3/7/10) damage

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 4

MIRANDA KNIGHT

AWARENESS	**3**	**PRESENCE**	**2**
COORDINATION	**3**	**RESOLVE**	**2**
INGENUITY	**2**	**STRENGTH**	**2**

SKILLS
Athletics 1, Craft (Baking) 3, Technology 1

TRAITS
Attractive

TECH LEVEL: 5
STORY POINTS: 2

into Jason, in this reality still an engineer, here to repair a Coke machine. Sapphire persuades him to use his pass key to let her into a shop selling mirrors. There are so many mirrors that they reflect each other to infinity.

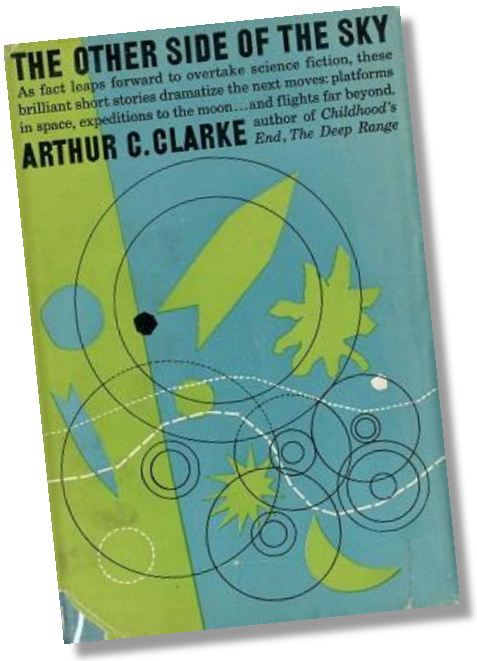
Sally and Miranda discuss what Sapphire said about the apparition they saw. It was Russell but it can't have been! Sally says she gave the Arthur C. Clarke book to her other son, Justin, as he loved science fiction and escapism. Miranda reminds her that Justin wasn't her only son; there's still Russell. Sally admits she gets so confused, with Justin dead and Russell in prison. In England, she and her sons used to live in Lyme Regis in a cottage bought using money left to her by her late husband. But one day, Justin got a job in America and moved away. In 2001, Sally's mother-in-law phoned and told her to turn the TV on. She did and saw her firstborn son die. So she sold the cottage and moved to America with Russell. She wanted to see the place Justin died and feel the dust. But she was too late; the dust had gone. They read out his name but that's not enough. Sally becomes too upset to continue and Miranda tells her to go and lie down.

Sapphire is confronted by a group of people who taunt her about her relationship with Steel. They vanish, leaving Sapphire confused as doesn't know who they were. Sapphire asks Miranda about Russell. There was a road accident in which he killed George Dixon, a government official who worked at the White House. Sally was in the car with him. Russell had been drinking; he'd never got over his brother dying. He was tried for terrorism and locked away for life on Alcatraz Island.

In his prison cell, the figure of his dead brother Justin is talking to Russell, trying to persuade him to break out and swim across the Bay. Russell knows he's not real and thinks he's

going mad, talking to ghosts. But Justin can touch him. Even so Russell thinks he's dreaming it. Justin talks about their childhood and convinces his brother he's real.

Sapphire calls Steel again, but he still doesn't believe it's her. She tells him to go to a shop called *Mirror World* and look into a mirror. In Steel's devastated reality, there's only one which has survived the explosion. They both look into the one he describes and concentrate on a crack in it. Sapphire is pulled through into the ruined version of the shop and is reunited with Steel.


THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY
As fact leaps forward to overtake science fiction, these brilliant short stories dramatize the next moves: platforms in space, expeditions to the moon...and flights far beyond.
ARTHUR C. CLARKE
author of Childhood's End, The Deep Range

Sapphire tells him that the version of the arcade she was in was in the present, July 8th, 2008. The divergence must have been caused by the time rupture and they need to repair it. Steel produces Jason, and Sapphire recognises him from the other reality. He asks Jason what caused the war, but he refuses to answer. Justin appears and says that paranoia caused the war. That and the warmonger who runs the free world, President Emma Godwin.

Sapphire confirms that the air is radioactive and they don't have long left. Justin explains that in the final months, there was so much anti-American feeling because the Godwin administration became so paranoid that it began bombing anyone. It may even have been responsible for the Valentine's Day Bombing at Canary Wharf on February 14th, 2003.

They all take the lift back down to the bunker and are met by Sally. Justin quotes the book, "*Many and strange are the universes that drift like bubbles in the foam upon the river of time*." Steel says that the book exists in this reality but not in the one they come from.

Justin tells them he thinks it all started with Godwin's Oceans Speech in 2002, which talked about the oceans being stained crimson with blood. Steel says that words don't cause time ruptures, but Sapphire corrects him that they can start wars. The speech was written by George Dixon, the man who was killed by Russell in the other reality. Sapphire realises that the moment he was killed was the moment the timelines diverged. Justin doesn't know who Russell is, but he existed in the other timeline. Sally tells them to let Russell be, but Steel accuses her of causing all this.

After he moved to America, Justin should have been killed in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, and Sally saw the planes strike the Twin Towers on the news reports back in England. But Sally's reflection spoke to her from the bathroom mirror, telling her that Justin will die in eight minutes time. Her reflection promised to save him but said it would be a life for a life. In New York, Justin was about to jump to his death from the World Trade Centre but suddenly found himself safe and alive, lying on grass. But Sally soon discovered that her other son, Russell, no longer existed. The thing in the mirror had taken him out of time, and the version from that reality now only exists as a phantom. Justin now knows the sacrifice his mother made for him.

Sapphire takes Sally back in time to her house in England to just before 9/11. Following

Sapphire's instructions, Sally unplugs the phone and goes to bed. But the spirit of Russell also speaks to her and tells her she doesn't have to do this. He knows that either Justin dies or Russell cannot exist. Sally turns on Sapphire and refuses to go through with it, instead sending her son to stay with their neighbours for the night. She turns on the gas oven and when she lights a match, she dies in the explosion.

Sapphire and Steel arrive in the devastated shopping arcade again. Sapphire tells Steel that the time rupture is still here. Sally is dead but nothing else has changed. Steel tells her that to restore the balance, Justin Brandom must die.

Justin has heard them talking. He says they could send him back so he could kill George Dixon and prevent the war. But Steel suspects that this isn't the real Justin and that they're being toyed with. "Justin" abruptly changes into the Nostalgia (see *Remember Me*). Is it still playing with their memories and perceptions? It changes again and again, taunting them with the faces and voices of other people from their past assignments. Steel tells Sapphire to concentrate; there must be something real for her to focus on. Events from her past flash through her mind, then she snaps back to reality. She tells Steel she was dreaming, but he insists they don't dream.

The elementals aren't sure where they are now. It's dark, and each has no way of telling whether the other is real. Have they destroyed everything by failing Sally Brandom?

There's the sound of something getting closer. Is it a trap or an answer? A door opens and another Sapphire and Steel appear. It's themselves from earlier, when they first entered the room in the bookshop and found the copy of *The Other Side of the Sky* in a box, the book that shouldn't exist in this version of reality. Sapphire realises that maybe they've been looking at this in too linear a fashion. Maybe this is the point of divergence, when Sapphire takes a book which shouldn't exist. She tries to take time back to stop her earlier self, and their other selves disappear along with the book. But the city is still devastated.

Sapphire and Steel look through the box of books and find ones titled after some of their previous assignments. Sapphire begins reading one and finds a passage in which Steel describes fiction as points of time captured in paper and ink. Steel reads another which describes them looking out of a window into an endless vista of space (see *Assignment VI*).

An electronic alarm beeps and Sapphire rushes away, saying she has a train to catch. Steel is left alone, but he hears a giggling voice close by. It's the creature from outside time which trapped them on a CD (see *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*). It says that Steel is a particularly fun and challenging plaything. The creature taunts him that, despite the clues it's been providing, he hasn't realised that he's still trapped on the CD. The voices of Steel and the creature begin repeating like a stuck record until the sound is interrupted by Sapphire and Steel's dialogue from when they first arrived on the steam train (see *The Passenger*). Then clips from numerous other assignments begin playing, cutting off, repeating, overlaying each other, ending with Ruby repeating "*They're trapped… They're trapped…*" (from *Second Sight*). Finally, there's just silence.

TRIGGERS

Sally's agreement to save Justin's life is the trigger for the scenario of the world destroyed by nuclear war, though Sapphire later speculates that the time rupture was caused when she picked up a book which doesn't exist in their version of reality. The book itself could also be a trigger.

However, the truth of which is the real trigger is irrelevant as the elementals are already trapped on the CD, and the entire scenario was created by the creature from outside time.

IRREGULARITIES

It initially seems that the transient beings are behind the events of this story, though once again they only make fleeting appearances: Sapphire briefly encounters a group of people she doesn't recognise in the arcade, and one of the transients speaks to Sally through her reflection. After several audio stories with the transients as antagonists, they remain as enigmatic as they did in the TV series.

The temporal phantoms of Russell and Justin are also irregularities, the effect of what the transient using Sally's reflection did to save Justin's life. They are relatively incidental to the plot, though they serve to make Sally appear to be unstable and to add extra mystery or menace. Justin's phantom appears in Russell's cell to try to persuade him to break out, but this is a sub-plot that goes nowhere. Russell's phantom has a slightly greater role in that he persuades his mother not to undo her decision to save Justin's life, resulting in her suicide.

However, the creature from outside time is revealed to be the true irregularity here. Are the transients just more of its creations, or are they using it against Sapphire and Steel?

SAPPHIRE AND STEEL (AND RUBY)

Sapphire uses her scanning ability numerous times during this story. She also manages to take time back for Sally, to before the death of Justin in 2001, which is far greater than her powers usually allow. There's no explanation for this, but perhaps the time rupture boosts her abilities in some way, or perhaps it's a clue that this isn't the real Sapphire after all.

When Miranda refers to Sapphire as being English, she replies "*Sometimes.*" Setting aside the fact that she isn't even human, we've seen in *Second Sight* that other versions of Sapphire might not have an English accent.

Although we learned in *Zero* that elementals don't dream (and it's reiterated by Steel in this story), Sapphire experiences a nightmare, presumably something to do with the nature of the trap she and Steel are in.

Steel uses his Cold Steel trait to freeze Jason's gun and disarm him (spending a Story Point to do so without the usual adverse effects on himself). He also uses his strength to break into the locked Boiler Room and demonstrates his technical skills again by repairing a lift.

The Ruby that appears in this story is a fake created by the creature from outside time (or maybe a transient). Steel accuses her of talking in riddles, but this is because the creature doesn't want to make things too obvious for him. If this Ruby is a fake, then presumably the one that appeared in previous stories was as well, or else she's also trapped on the CD. It's possible that the Sapphire in this story is also a fake, at least during her final scene, and the creature is toying with Steel alone.

The story ends with Steel realising that they are still trapped on a compact disc and have been since at least as far back as *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*. In fact, the intention of series co-producer Nigel Fairs was that *all* the audios take place within the CD trap and that Sapphire and Steel are trapped on every *S&S* CD that Big Finish manufactured. This effectively places Sapphire and Steel in pretty much the same predicament they were in at the end of the TV series: in a trap with no way out.

RUNNING THE ASSIGNMENT

This is the final story in the Transients War story-arc, the final audio in the series and the last official *Sapphire & Steel* fiction to date.

There are numerous references to previous *Sapphire & Steel* stories, including a book of Stephen Bunnings' play *The Abandoned Lady* (from *Water Like a Stone*), other books titled *Assignment VI, The Passenger, Daisy Chain* and

All Fall Down (all titles of *Sapphire & Steel* stories), and copies of *Murder on the Orient Express* (from *The Passenger*) and *Dracula* (from *The Mystery of the Missing Hour*). The creature from outside time also imitates characters from several previous stories including *The Passenger, The Lighthouse, Dead Man Walking, Water Like a Stone, The Mystery of the Missing Hour* and *Remember Me*.

This story prominently features *The Other Side of the Sky* by Arthur C. Clarke. This is a 1958 anthology of short stories which includes one describing a world located on a Möbius strip, a topological space of the type mentioned in *Second Sight* as being a trap used by the transients against Silver. The short story is called *The Wall of Darkness*, from which the title of this audio is taken and from which a quotation is used here several times: "*Many and strange are the universes that drift like bubbles in the foam upon the river of time*". Steel indicates that *The Other Side of the Sky* doesn't exist in his and Sapphire's reality, another clue that none of this is real.

The tune Sapphire and Steel hear being whistled at several points in the story, which Sapphire identifies as *God Bless America*, is actually the British national anthem *God Save the King/Queen*, which was previously heard in *The Mystery of the Missing Hour* and *Second Sight* but not named. As *God Bless America* is still under copyright, perhaps Big Finish found they couldn't afford the rights to use the correct tune but forgot (or it was too late) to change Sapphire's line. In which case, was it also intended to have been *God Bless America* in the earlier stories? Or is this another clue?

There are two different versions of reality for the GM to keep track of. In one, the world was destroyed in a nuclear war in 2004 and the characters are survivors sheltering in a bunker beneath a shopping arcade in San Francisco, with Russell existing only as a temporal phantom. In the other, there was no nuclear war, but Justin was killed in 9/11 and is the phantom in this reality, while Russell is imprisoned in Alcatraz.

DOES THE ENDING INVALIDATE THE ENTIRE AUDIO SERIES?

The revelation that Sapphire and Steel have been trapped on CD since the start of the audio stories, and that they have experienced these assignments over and over again whenever anyone plays one of the discs, is an interesting postmodern twist. But if these adventures have all been fictional, can we rely on anything we learn from them about the elementals and their enemies? Does the Nostalgia, for example, even exist in Sapphire and Steel's reality?

Well, the creature would presumably wish to make the trap as close as possible to reality to avoid Sapphire and Steel noticing any discrepancies, so much of the information we gain may well be correct. When that's not the case, as in *The Murder of the Missing Hour*, the fiction Sapphire and Steel are trapped in is so postmodern and metatextual that it's obvious to the listener what is real and what isn't.

Ultimately though, we can't prove this either way so it's up to the individual GM. But even if the GM decides they can't rely on the information provided in the audios, the stories themselves still offer many ideas for use in games.

As the final story in Big Finish's series, *Wall of Darkness* works remarkably well, leaving the lead characters in much the same situation as the TV series did, thus allowing any future revival to resume their adventures seamlessly. For a game though, the ending may be too postmodern and would be hard for a GM to replicate unless they're in the habit of recording their games. In any case, for most players a trap is something to escape from, not a final end, and Sapphire and Steel have escaped from similar traps before!

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Sally Brandom:** Justin and Russell's mother. British bookshop owner who moved to America to be with Justin. One of the survivors in Jason's bunker. Overbearingly devoted to Justin.
- **Justin Brandom:** Sally's eldest son. British, but moved to New York. In one reality, he miraculously survived 9/11 and became one of the survivors in the San Francisco bunker; in the other, he died in the 9/11 attack but exists as a phantom. Alcoholic.
- **Russell Brandom:** Sally's younger son. In one reality, he was sentenced to life in Alcatraz; in the other, he was erased from reality but exists as a phantom and can move between the realities.
- **Jason Knight:** Drinks machine repairman. In the reality in which the world is wiped out by a nuclear war, he managed to get into a secret bunker and made himself leader of a small group of survivors. A nobody who has become a tin-pot tyrant.
- **Miranda Knight:** Miri, Jason's sister who in one reality works in Sally's bookshop. In the other, she's one of the survivors in the bunker.
- **Ruby:** An elemental agent with an affinity with music. See page 133 for Ruby's stats, though the version in this story isn't the real thing.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

- References to a world within a Möbius strip bring to mind the concept of an entire universe within a Klein bottle, inspired by the BBC's Eighth Doctor novels of the 1990s. And if such a bottle universe contains its own bottle universe and so on perhaps infinitely, how could any elemental escape? It's certainly an idea that's fitting for *Sapphire & Steel*.

RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TABLES

For GMs who wish to kick-start their imagination, the following tables can provide the bare bones of an assignment for Sapphire and Steel or their fellow elemental agents. The options listed aren't intended to cover all possibilities, and the result from rolling on one table may mean that some results from another don't make sense, in which case roll again or choose a more suitable outcome. Indeed, entire tables may be ignored altogether if desired.

STYLE/THEME: 2D6

2	Strange, e.g. fantasy, magic, metatextual, postmodern
3	Historical mystery, e.g. Princes in the Tower, Amelia Earhart
4-5	Murder mystery
6-8	Ghost stories/supernatural
9-10	Horror/weird tales
11	Science fiction, e.g. experiments gone wrong, time travel
12	Apocalypse/post-apocalypse

LOCATION: 1D100

1	Extradimensional plane
2-3	Industrial site/factory/mill/office block
4-5	Campsite/caravan park/trailer park
6-7	Remote base, e.g. arctic, jungle, desert, undersea, space
8-9	Docks/port/harbour/shipyard
10-11	Church/mosque/synagogue/temple
12-14	Underground, e.g. mine, bunker, caves
15-17	Railway/underground/bus station
18-20	Pub/inn/hotel/motel
21-23	Vehicle – roll on separate table below
24-27	Urban/suburban, e.g. house, apartment, residential home
28-31	Archaeological/palaeontological dig
32-36	Auction house/art gallery
37-41	Historic site, e.g. abbey, castle, palace
42-47	Museum/archive/library
48-53	Rural, e.g. remote house, cottage, farm
54-59	Stately home/large country house
60-64	Theatre/concert hall/cinema
65-69	Ancient site, e.g. pyramid/ziggurat, ancient temple, stone circle, tomb
70-73	Shop/department store/arcade/mall
74-77	Scientific or medical facility, e.g. laboratory, observatory, hospital
78-80	Airport/aerodrome/airfield/hanger
81-83	Service station/garage/truck stop
84-86	School/college/university
87-89	Prison/detention centre/refugee camp
90-91	Funfair/theme park/circus
92-93	Coastal/nearshore, e.g. lighthouse, Martello tower, sea fort, oil platform
94-95	Film set/TV studio/recording studio
96-97	Military site, e.g. barracks, naval base
98-99	Zoo/aviary/aquarium/sea life centre
100	Other/GM's choice (or roll again)

VEHICLE – use if LOCATION result is 21-23: 2D6

2-4	Air, e.g. airliner, cargo plane, airship
5-7	Sea, e.g. cruise liner, container ship, submarine
8-11	Land, e.g. train, truck/road train, bus, convoy
12	Space, e.g. space shuttle, landing craft

CONDITION OF LOCATION: 1D6

1	Open/active
2-3	Closed/deserted
4-5	Abandoned/derelict
6	Ruined

TRIGGER: 2D6

2-3	Place – a specific location where the walls between dimensions are thin
4-5	Emotion – usually negative such as rage, resentment, regret
6-8	Object – usually something old
9-10	Person – an individual who has become the focus or host of the irregularity
11	Event – a powerful event that has left a resonance
12	Other/none – e.g. a memory, a deliberate trap, no identifiable trigger

IRREGULARITY: 1D6

1-2	Time and its scions in some form
3	Non-human agent of Time, e.g. the Darkness, the Shape, the Pied Piper
4	Human agent of Time
5	Transient beings
6	Independent threat, e.g. the Nostalgia

SOURCE OF IRREGULARITY: 2D6

2	Future
3-4	Present
5-9	Past
10-11	Ancient past
12	Other, e.g. alternative timeline, other dimension

JOANNA'S A GEM!

SHE's thirty-four years old and has appeared on TV in around 122 countries, probably speaking about 35 languages. Thanks to series like **The New Avengers** and, currently, ATV's **Sapphire & Steel,** Joanna Lumley continues to be one of the most popular and most recognised actresses in the world.

Says Joanna about life as a superstar: *"I try so hard to be even-keeled and normal about the pressure I'm under but people recognise me like they recognise a soap pad. If it gets to the point where I'm on a shopping expedition and my brain just can't run quietly on deciding what I'm going to buy for dinner, I don't know how I'll cope.*

"Then, perhaps more difficult still, is what happens when all that fame goes away; I hope I won't care, that I'll say, 'Thank goodness.'"

There's not much chance of the talented India-born daughter of an Army Major disappearing from our screens, though, for since playing the part of that dangerously exciting lady Purdey in **The New Avengers** her previously stuttering career in the uncertain world of acting has become a little more stable. Joanna, however, still has strong ambitions to improve herself and her career saying: *"I think I could be good as an actress. Occasionally people whom I admire have said a scene I've been in was good. But I'm not happy with my acting yet. I want to stack up the technique and experience."*

Undoubtedly helping her along is her co-star in **Sapphire & Steel,** David McCallum, whom Joanna admires tremendously, saying: *"He's a very clever actor. I feel like a fourth former doing the school play opposite the head boy."*

The current series of **Sapphire & Steel** has proved as successful and watchable as ever with Joanna as the dazzling, psychic Sapphire: *"It's a marvellous role with great power"*, she says, *"because it is based on imagination and not violence."*

Joanna's own belief in the supernatural has helped her tremendously in the series and apart from being convinced that she has lived before as a public schoolboy many years ago, she often knows what someone is going to say as though she's heard it before, and frequently finds places where she's certain she's been in a past life.

One thing's for sure, though, as long as Joanna herself keeps re-appearing on our screens nobody's going to be too worried!

AND FINALLY... A little bonus from *Look-In* Vol.10 (1981) #7